

# WIRE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

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# The Masthead

More by accident than design, this month's *Wire* features two separate encounters with Kenneth Anger (see page 30), and a review of Coil live, locking off the *On Location* section on page 84. A coincidence of Crowleyites appearing in the same issue might well prompt the question: do you believe in magic? And is that magic with or without a 'K'? Speaking personally, the answers are no, and dunno the difference.

Indeed I have never been able to raise an interest in Aleister Crowley above a profound indifference since reading his *Diary Of A Drug Fiend* at an impressionable age, when I had little knowledge of his reputation as a magician. In addition, the 'Buggies gets high' quality of his prose didn't jazz very well with his world's most evil man's notoriety, effectively inoculating me against the charismatic hold on the more esoteric corners of popular culture that he has continued to exert long after his death in 1947. But hey, let's not be beastly to the Great Beast, for he has been a shaping influence on the thinking of both Coil and Anger, to name just two significant figures.

As reviewer Keith Moliné says, Coil were largely on

fine form at the London show at Hackney Empire, especially on their funny and fabulously fury new song, 'Sex With Sun Ra', whose sex magic might well make a believer out of me yet. In Sun Ra, if not the Great Beast, For those who didn't make it to Hackney, it's worth hunting down the song on the Coil CD-R release *Black Antlers* - go to [threshholdhouse.com](http://threshholdhouse.com) to check on current availability.

Drawing on an interview he conducted with Anger in London in 1998, Edwin Pouncey's absorbing study concentrates on the magic elements in the film maker's work. I might be a disbeliever, but I'm not about to deny the thoroughly spellbinding qualities of his *Mageek Lantern Cycle*. Not only does the cycle focus on magic rituals, Anger states the films themselves are intended as spells, and for sure there's genuine magic in his superlative editing, together of rock and pop and noise and darkly voluptuous images, either rapidly intercut or superimposed on each other in a flickering parade of witches, high priests, gods and demons that will either leave you intoxicated or trigger an epileptic fit.

Debauched imagery and subject matter notwithstanding, the magical impact of Anger's films has less to do with Aleister Crowley and more to do with his youthful absorption of montage methods of decidedly materialist Soviet directors like Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, dialectically cross-hatched with Jean Cocteau's cinema of enchantment. Cocteau, incidentally, was an early champion of Anger's work.

As Richard Henderson's piece makes clear, Anger is not an easy or pleasant man. But at least the way his encounter ended allowed Richard to reference Laurel & Hardy, whose members in *The Wire* are all too rare from the point of view of at least two of the editorial team here. Why this might be I just can't fathom, given Laurel & Hardy's pioneering of the kind of industrial imagery dear to Einsturzende Neubauten, among others. Listen to this snatch of telephone conversation from *Their First Mistake* – this is from memory so please forgive any inexactitude – 'Hoy, Ollie, this is me, Stanley. Do you want to go to the cement workers' bazaar? They're auctioning a steam shovel.'

CHRIS BOHN

# WIRE

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**With next month's issue of *The Wire* all subscribers will receive an exclusive free copy of *Exploratory Music From Portugal***

Compiled to coincide with the Atlantic Waves 2004 festival of Portuguese music, which takes place in London between 23 September and 7 December, *Exploratory Music From Portugal* collects 16 tracks by some of the Mediterranean region's most adventurous musicians. As with the festival, the CD showcases a wide spectrum of musical approaches, from fado and new takes on traditional Portuguese folk forms to experimental electronics, free improvisation, electroacoustic composition and more. Musicians contributing tracks to the CD include Cristina Branco, Carlos Zingaro, Telecuto, Autodigest, Rei Júnior and more. The CD will be given away free to all subscribers with copies of next month's October issue. In the meantime, go to [www.atlanticwaves.org.uk](http://www.atlanticwaves.org.uk) for information on the Atlantic Waves festival.

*Exploratory Music From Portugal* is the latest instalment in an ongoing series of CDs which are specially produced for *The Wire* and given away to all the magazine's subscribers worldwide with selected issues of the zine. These CDs are only available to subscribers, and are not on sale with the magazine in the shops. If you are not yet a subscriber you can still get your hands on a copy of the CD by taking out a new subscription to *The Wire* this month. Just turn to page 98 or go to [www.thewire.co.uk](http://www.thewire.co.uk).

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# Letters

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fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, email [letters@thewire.co.uk](mailto:letters@thewire.co.uk)



Far-sighted: Asian Dub Foundation's Steve Chandra



## Flourishing musical community

Contrary to your statement in the introduction to Asian Dub Foundation's Invisible Jukebox (*The Wire* 246), I must point out that Community Music Ltd (CML) is alive and well, has grown substantially since the mid-90s, has never ceased to be extremely active throughout our 23 year history. CML was AD's partner in the formation of Asian Dub Foundation Education (ADFE) and continues to support new and emerging artists along with a full education and training programme. To suggest that we have ceased trading for the last decade is unfortunate and bewildering given that we have worked directly with thousands of young people, formed several new companies (one of which is the very successful PyrotechnicRadio.com), and trained hundreds of musicians. Information on our activities can be found on our Website: [www.cmlonline.org.uk](http://www.cmlonline.org.uk).  
**Allison Tickell** Development Director, Community Music London, UK

## Retro-active

Re Invisible Jukebox, *The Wire* 246: Electroacoustic Improvisation as retro? I wonder just how AD's Steve Chandra believes modernity should be manifested in sound. If challenging notions of structure and perceptions of timbre are retro concepts, *The Wire* just may have to change the magazine subtitle to Adventures In Old-time Music... I found this 'retro/oriental' comment strange considering Mr Chandra's own music and its dependence on otherwise retro traditions of raga and taala as well as the tumult of identity politics being alleviated by constant reference to musics South Asian.

**Chandan Narayan** Ann Arbor, USA

## Copyrights and wrongs

The statements about Mark Leckey's installation at Tate Britain (*Cross Platform*, *The Wire* 246) were interesting. Situationist ideas about détournement are often used to dignify work by those who don't have much of their own to offer. Those ideas were about using bits of other people's work, but were not about making other people's art "your own". Mark Leckey can build big speakers, but blasting a Jacob Epstein sculpture with other people's music is a monologue, not a conversation.

How do Thriving Guitars and The Beach Boys feel about Mark Leckey claiming their work is part of the "distrutus of the everyday"? How do the producers who MADE the "Guitar" that Leckey used in his exhibit feel about him crediting the more famous musicians, but not mentioning their names? If Lina Cvijanovic-Russell put time and effort into reporting her own artworks, and then heard about someone else exhibiting them in one of the most famous museums in the world, how do you think she'd feel?

It's not like *The Wire* is likely to STOP printing the copyright notices that protect the work of its own journalists, but the downside of parrotting hip clichés about appropriation is that when the shoe's on the other foot, you haven't got a leg to stand on.

**Jake Jones** London, UK

## Prog is Levene?

It was very amusing to read Keith Moliné's *Exophany* (*The Wire* 246), where he explained his instant satori (at the age of 11) for his new musical direction at witnessing PNL on TV's *Old Grey Whistle Test*.

He goes on to say, "I stopped bothering to develop

my musical chops, frowning instead a Levene-like slippiness." I'm sure that Moliné realises that Keith Levene is actually far from "slippery" – then and now – as he's a big fan of Yes guitarist Steve Howe.

Levene was even a roadie for Yes before he met Mick Jones and later joined The Clash. Maybe I'm saying things that Moliné is already aware of, but just in case, I thought I'd mention it, as it may vindicate his "anti-Prog Zeal" of the time and reunite with his "teenage" friends and Prog veterans – Blue Stratos, Tim Jones Manchester, UK

## Chasing the Yankee dollar

Perhapse it's my natural suspicion gone mad, but did I sense a slightly sniffty tone in your Go To column (*The Wire* 246), in relation to the Indel/Wico/WEA case (relating to a sample on Wico's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* CD)? It seems to me that Indel are doing a laudable job in making their entire back catalogue available as free downloads. According to them, anyone can use this material for whatever purpose they feel fit, as long as they (Indel) get a credit. If a high flying corporation like WEA thinks it can steamroller over such seemingly reasonable terms then in my eyes they deserve taking to the cleaners (or indeed the courts). If I've been taken in by some evil fraud then obviously I beg your pardon, but if not, I hope this isn't a sign of The Wire drifting from its usual happy path of raising up Indel-esque underdogs for our delectation.

**Daren Giddings** via email

## Make some noise

I want to get straight to the point: got this month's *Wire* from the newsagent. The Noise Printer (issue

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ARE IN THE PARK  
GEOGRAPHIC LATE SUMMER 2004



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**GEOGRAPHIC**

# Letters

246) was great! As always The Wire is a brilliant magazine, that through words restores a sense of mystique to music and makes me want to buy music. Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant!

Zenon Grakowski via email

## Suppressed freedoms

It was good to see the Freedom Of The City festival review not only an On Location review but also editorial backslap in issue 244. Is it possible, however, that, overfamiliar with the local talent, your London based reviewers overvalued some of the wisdom and unusual formations? I agree with everything Will Montgomery said about the opening performance by AMM, who mysteriously manage always to be greater than the sum of their parts, but could the same really be said of MEV? Fredéric Rzowska has written some fine music, and a Richard Teitelbaum/Anthony Braxton concert in Paris was one of the highlights of my musical existence. But I found MEV's performance energetic, rambling and ultimately dull. And beyond a superficial novelty of sound, was there anything to justify Phil England's enthusiasm for the little heard Clive Bell/Syntex Heletz composition? I would also suggest that Morgan Goberman's display of virtuoso vocal skill was far less inherently musical than Phil Minton's subtler, totally integrated contribution to the group Quilqua.

Two other groups with a similar commitment to unegotistical, shared creativity went mysteriously unmentioned. If all four members of Alex Ward's quartet were excellent, percussionist Steve Noble's endless but discreet pattern-shifting and inventiveness were especially impressive. And didn't the quiet intensity of Chris Burn's ensemble deserve acknowledgement? Other musicians like Paul Dunmall and Roger Smith were probably victims of the limited space available to your reviewers.

As a first-time visitor to the festival, I was impressed by the sustained quality and variety of the music on offer, everything from the borderline of silence to the heart-shaking roar of the Parker/Grey/Lytton trio in full spate. This is a festival that deserves every support, one that should not be taken for granted and certainly not one that should be allowed to die.

Bernd O Seugndin, Dublin, Ireland

## Company differences

I find it strange to read that "the annual Freedom Of The City continues the tradition of Derek Bailey's Company Week" (The Compiler, The Wire 246), since the two events are organised in completely different ways. Bailey invites individuals who get into numerous one-off groups during the course of the event. The

organisers of Freedom Of The City – Evan Parker, Eddie Prevost and myself (not just me, please) – invite groups to appear as predetermined groups once during the festival (much in the way of "traditional" festivals). I'm not putting forward one method as being superior, just pointing out the fundamental difference.

On another point: Please note that Phil Minton's "impeccably rare solo debut *A Doughnut In Both Hands*" (Phil Minton article, same issue) has been available as an Empreem CD for the last six years!

Martin Davidson Emsalem, London, UK

## Sonny and Sonic

David Keenan's review of the Elliott Sharp/Melvin Gibbs/Lance Carter CO Raw Meet (Soundcheck, The Wire 244) indicates that only Carter played with Sonny Sharrock. Keenan seems to be unaware that Melvin Gibbs's discography in conjunction with Sharrock is slightly larger – he played on both *Seize The Rainbow* and *Livin' In New York* – not to mention having a stint in The Rollins Band. That said, I doubt that either of these cheerleaderish pretensions could stand Elliott Sharp any verisimilitude to sound like a "Sonny Sharrock" anyone would care to listen to.

PS: Why do guys always kiss Some Youth's ass? They haven't been contenders since Sister. Get over it. Your shelf space could be used as much better. If Thurston Moore is going around talking about how Sonic Nurse is like something combined with Fleetwood Mac's *Bare Trees* then you must not be aware that said LP contained an embryonic version of sappy classic "Sentimental Lady", and I can guarantee there's nothing that listenable on Sonic Nurse.

Libby Adams San Francisco, USA

## Settling scores

I admire Chris Connelly, so I felt I should reply to his letter (The Wire 245) about my Cornelius Cardew review, or at least reply to those parts of his letter that I understood. I'm not sure what "taking out a butt-end version of the composer's entire life" actually means and I'm certainly not sure who is being accused of what in what follows.

There is nothing "sensationalist" in suggesting, even after this lapse of time, that there is something unexplained about Cardew's death. A hit-and-run death is by definition unexplained and the available versions are unsatisfactory, also by definition. So who is being charged when Chris says, "it's dangerous to assume that history stops us from looking back"? Why would searching for an explanation of what went "wrong" later in Cardew's career (which begs a large question) lead improvisers to fetishise his music?

Was it really his intention to "tell stories about reality"? And I'm afraid there's something weird about the syntax of "it's not the music that assumes sovereignty over its time but those who think of artists as trespassing in it".

As to the rest, I know "ineahesitable document" is a reference to Bach and only used it in a mildly effusive way, and yes, Muntzian was a return to graphic scoring. Which is good, isn't it? And bad, as well. Or have I got it wrong?

Brian Morton via email

## Mondo bongo

I just bought Ben Wilson's book *Derek Bailey And The Story Of Free Improvisation* (reviewed in Print Run, The Wire 245). Very handsome and great picture research. But can we trust a music writer who cannot tell a bongo from a maraca?

Steve Beresford London, UK

## Death notices

Re: Billie Jean, The Wire 245. The passing of Elvis Jones and Steve Lucy was indeed a sad loss to music. Also worth a mention was the loss of jazz guitarist Barney Kessel, who died in May. As a sought-after studio guitarist, Kessel's list of contributions cannot be underestimated. As well as being featured on many jazz LPs and playing in countless bands (Charlie Parker's included), Kessel provided guitar on the "wall of sound" sessions for Phil Spector and also brought the theremin to the attention of Brian Wilson. For these reasons alone, Kessel should be remembered as an influence in modern music.

Dave Clarkson Manchester, UK

## Saint preserved

On the recent BBC1 documentary *Saint John Coltrane* I was stunned to see film extracts from the only live performance of his *A Love Supreme* suite at the 1965 Antibes Jazz Festival. It would be wonderful to see this historic concert in its entirety and, surely, the owner of the master copy of this film (a French TV company?) should now make it generally available on video or DVD?

Dave Taylor Purbeck, UK

## Corrections

Issue 246 Pharaoh Overlord's *The Battle Of The Achammer (Live)* on Last Visible Dog is not a reissue of an earlier Ekdro release by the same group, as written in the Avant Rock column, issue 244. In Soundcheck, the photo of Alvin Curran was taken by Oily Hewitt, not John Hooper as stated. □

## Coming next month

**The Wire 248: on sale from 23 September**

[www.thewire.co.uk](http://www.thewire.co.uk)

The Wire's official Web presence, featuring news, links, cut-out print articles, MP3s, video clips, web exclusives, mailing list, merchandise and more

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A weekly show of new music hosted by The Wire staff. Broadcasting across London on 104.4 FM every Thursday, 9:30-11am GMT, repeated every Wednesday, 7:30-9am GMT, with simultaneous streaming at [www.resonancefm.com](http://www.resonancefm.com)

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**The Wire**

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# Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.

Compiled by The Trawler



Going to commercial: Blaik Bargeld (above, second right); Warped vision: Jamie Lidell (right)

Theoretical as well as actual noise will be the order of the day on Saturday 20 November at White Hart Lane in North London, home not just to Tottenham Hotspur but Middlesex University. **Noisetheroyne&#2**takes place between 10-6pm, with organisers putting a big shout out to "noisicians of every stripe" to offer their contributions on a number of noise-related topics. These will include: Is noise accountable to the terms of a pre-ordained theoretical discourse on aesthetics? Does noise fail in its imputed assault on traditional aesthetics and musicology? Also wrestled with is the question, Is noise enjoyed? Who enjoys it? Are noisicians perverted abnegators who, due to emotional deficit, are unable to experience the full effect of soul/pop/classical music? Enthusiasts, practitioners and those who do not consider themselves to be perverted abnegators are duly invited to attend and even make their case. Audiovisual equipment will be available and presentations involving demonstrations of noise will be possible. Spurs are playing away that weekend, so the area will be nois and quiet. To take part, email andymc@tigtag.com and ray.dresser@btopenworld.com and ray.dresser@btopenworld.com >>> Wire drummer Steve Barker's On The Wire radio show celebrates 20 years on BBC Northwest with a special broadcast on 18 September featuring special guests Jan Wobble and Mark E Smith >>> Mute's Grey Area is to reissue five albums by Dublin's **Prinny Prunes** on 4 October. The full range of their music is in evidence on *Over The Rainbow*, a compilation of early unreleased tracks and ramblings including the extreme "Red Nettle" from NME's cassette compilation *C81* >>> Warp Records have announced the release of their first ever DVD collection on 27 September. Entitled *Warp Vision (The Videos 1989-2004)*, it will feature numerous Warp Artists, ranging from Aphex Twin, LFO and Nightmares On Wax to Seefeel, Autodrive and Jamie Lidell, as well as the directorial efforts of, among others, Jarvis Cocker, Douglas Hart and Chris Cunningham. The release will be accompanied by a bonus one-hour Warp mix CD by London based DJs Buddy Peace and Zita >>> First put together as a compilation for Wire

subscribers to accompany issue 238, Archiv 1.1, which showcases Germany's ultra-minimalist electronics label **Raster-Noton**, is now available as an American compilation. This edition will feature new and unreleased tracks not included on the original anthology. Among the artists featured are Seaking, Komet, Byetone, Modul, Raster's in-house group Signal, Hervé Baghossian and American drone artist William Basinski >>> The line-up has been announced for this year's 18th Unlimited Festival, which takes place between November 5-7 in Wels, Austria. An international range of artists has been assembled including America's Fred Anderson & Hamid Drake, Australian specialists in elongated insect jazz The Necks, and Dondonstam. The Wyatt Project, in which musicians such as John Graves, Sylvain Kassap and Jacques Maheux score new arrangements of Wyatt songs. Also playing will be an intriguing quartet featuring Ikuu Mon, Christian Fennessy, Sylvie Courvoisier and singer Catherine Journeaux >>> Following the release of *Ghost's Hypnotic Underworld* earlier this year, group leader **Masaki Batoh** releases *Collected Works 1995-1996* on Drag City. The curiously narrow timespan of this anthology is accounted for by the fact that it comprises *A Ghost From The Darkened Sea* and *Kikkakubeshi*, two solo EPS Batoh found time to make while cogitating on *Ghost's* *Lama Ruby* Rebi album. Batoh plays a variety of instruments on *Collected Works*, including hurdy-gurdy, organ, Moog synthesizer, drums and the wonderfully obscure duff and gin pipe. A cover of Can's "You Do Right" also features >>> **Daimo Suzuki** has dropped us a line to inform us that he is planning a UK/Ireland tour for three months commencing in March 2005 and, in his fervent spirit of inclusiveness, is looking for "local sound carriers" (ie musicians) to perform "instant compositions" with him during this period. Interested parties are directed to Daimo's Website at [www.daimosuzuki.com](http://www.daimosuzuki.com). The Wire's own Mike Barnes, himself a recent Suzuki collaborator, can thoroughly recommend the experience >>> **Scratch Perverts** offer a taster of their myriad and virtuous DJing techniques, honed during innumerable battle



DJing events since their inception in 1997. Come Get It, A limited edition 12" on their own Scratch Perverts label, featuring among others Moe Del and Dynamite MC, sees them work their needles to brutal effect across guitar-driven and smoky soul bounces. Their debut album will follow in 2005 >>> Teutonic pioneers in electronic music, they were fitted by pop artists as diverse as Herbie Hancock and the New Romantics, with Afrika Bambaataa reworking their material in the early 80s to provide the metal framework for the Hip-Hop era. You haven't guessed it - we're referring to **Roboterwerke**, a German outfit who started in the mid-80s constructing their own prototype electronic instruments and who were themselves later influenced by P-funk and soca, relocating to the Caribbean and disappearing in a garga haze as Kraftwerk took the plaudits as Technopop innovators. Also known as Supersempf, they released the series of albums in the late 70s that sealed their reputation. They may sound like a spoof but their existence is confirmed by Roboterwerke, a 15 track collection of their "electronic classics", including "Let's Beams Him Up", released on 25 October on the Millennium label >>> Lovers of remarkably opaque prose may be interested to know that ex-Flying Lizard turned academic **David Cunningham** has an essay in the latest edition of *Radical Philosophy* (125) entitled "Rethinking Modern Music", in which he examines contemporary music in the light of Theodor Adorno and explores the concept of nuance. The magazine also features an essay on Italian postwar composer Luigi Nono >>> Finally, in an excruciating twist of postmodern irony, **Blaik Bargeld**, leader of *Einstürzende Neubauten* (which means, of course, Collapsing New Buildings) has made a series of commercials for a German home improvement company, in which he dramatically reads the contents of their catalogues to camera. This is explained as a bid on Bargeld's part to subvert public conceptions of Neubauten. Well, of course. Plans for Throbbing Gristle to star in a new series of ads for Frey Bentos meat pies and for Nurse With Wound to front BUPA's new campaign remain unconfirmed. □

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# MIRA CALIX

SPACES FOR SPECIES BY CLIVE BELL



In March 2003 the audience at London's Royal Festival Hall was treated to a cross-species collaboration. Teaming up DJ-turned-composer and Warp recording artist Mira Calix with the classically trained virtuoso players of the London Sinfonietta might seem almost a cross-species test of musical communication in itself, but the other performers on stage, singing their hearts out on cue, were several varieties of crickets and locusts. "There were little cameras and microphones in the box with the insects, so I could bring them into the piece," says Mira Calix, aka Chantal Passamonte, on the phone from her home in rural Suffolk. "We had someone who looked after the insects. In Rome a protester stood up, who was very concerned about the wellbeing of insects. But they were fed and watered, and always released after the performance."

Now Warp are releasing a mini-album titled *Nunu*. It contains two versions of Mira Calix's insect chorale, plus an installation piece made for the conservatory at London's Barbican, to celebrate the reopening this year of the Barbican art gallery. The origins of *Nunu* go back to a 2002 commission from a music festival in Geneva called La Bâtie (reviewed in *The Wire* 226). The Natural History Museum in Geneva sent over a choice selection from their archive of insect recordings. "The proposal was to write a 30 minute piece of music, but just with insect sounds, so you couldn't add any strings or drum machines or anything – which was right up my street. The stringy chords that sound quite synthetic are actually wasps. I found the recordings amazing, especially the butterflies' wings. They were such incredible sounds that I used a lot of them unprocessed. The version on *Nunu* is the last ten minutes or so of the full piece."

Passamonte feels the reason why she was chosen by La Bâtie was her long-term interest in field recordings. Her careful sculpting of ambiguous sounds – some warm, others austere – is clear from her

previous two albums on Warp, John Peel favourite *One On One* (2000) and last year's *Skimskitta*. Over the course of Skimskitta's 21 sequued tracks she constructs a very personal world. There are traces of her battered Fender Stratocaster and occasional ghost vocals, alongside piano melodies, vintage synths and sound painting achieved by elderly effects machines in odd boxes. But for this artist, working in delicious isolation in East Anglia, recordings literally made in fields seem to be key.

"When I first started making music I didn't have a lot of equipment, and I would go outside and record," says Passamonte. "I really like going outside! I made kick drums and so on from the sounds of trees and stones. I recorded *One On One* when I was still living in Sheffield, so I used to go to the park a lot. Everything since then has been in the country. I like taking my minidisc and going out for an afternoon walk, just having some fun really. I used to have this cheeky tree, and you just knew you'd get amazing sounds from it when the wind came up. Or you trip over something walking through the woods, and you think, oh my god, that was great! When you get back in the studio you discover even more things you can do with that sound. I do use rural sounds, because that's my environment, and probably my natural taste. I'm drawn to leaves and pebbles – I just like crunchy, funny sounds. You can find great noises walking around the house, and I've done that too, but I think I like the adventure of not knowing where you're going, having a random wander. Even in a park, where you focus on really small sounds, I remember once in a park someone came past with a pram and it had the funniest little creak. It obviously needed some oil. Then of course I had to follow them down the path."

For the Festival Hall's Ether Festival in 2003, London Sinfonietta prepared transmissions of music by fellow Warp artists Aphex Twin and Boards Of Canada. In Mira Calix's case, a live collaboration was

the aim. "*Nunu*" seemed a good place to start because of that stringy sound the wasps made. They transcribed a loose score for the string section and clarinets to play, I really like wooden instruments, and I wanted a clement, to integrate with the sub-bass and resonance of the piece. Then we rehearsed together, and instead of having the musicians play along with the crickets, we tried to have them impersonate insects. They were great at this, especially the lead violinist who begins the piece. One of the other violinists ended up playing with her teeth. They were very open and prepared to try things out."

For the Barbican conservatory, Passamonte already had a fondness for the place, having seen a close friend get married there. "Le Jardin Du Barbican" was played over speakers hidden among the conservatory's lush urban environment of foliage and concrete. "The idea was to do a piece that sounded like a living garden," says Passamonte. "There's a lot of scraping sounds that creep up on you, and they are actually me doing some gardening, in fact re-potting some plants. I wanted to emphasize that you are in a garden, a kind of accelerated hyper-garden."

A DJ who has toured with Radiohead, Pled and Autotache, with her roots firmly in club culture, I wonder whether Passamonte ever feels it at ease working in what you might call high art contexts. Not a problem, she says, it's more a case of being sensitive to spaces. "I find certain spaces exciting," she continues, "for example the Natural History Museum in Geneva. It's so squat, there's no multimedia, just stuffed animals. It's exactly like museums you want to be a kid, but it looks beautiful. And if you DJ, you have to bond to the people and the place. I toured America for ages, playing records night after night. You can play the same record in Portland and in New York, and the response is completely different. Because I've been doing that for so long, you get to see how space has an effect on people." □ *Nunu* is out now on Warp

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# FELIX KUBIN

SPACE AGE BOLSHEVIK  
BY ANNE HILDE NESET



"I write songs," declares 34 year old electronic space-popper, radio playwright and animator Felix Kubin from his home in Hamburg. "Songs guarantee a certain structure and timing. My understanding of a song goes very far. Structure and a feeling for good transitions are lacking in a lot of so called experimental music and laptop music. Even all the masterpieces of modern classical music – like Ligeti, or Stockhausen's *Gesang Der Junglinge* – work like good pop songs," he elaborates. "I wished a lot of electronic music was less carpentry, less decorative. Even if it is abstract, it is also often *Instyle Muzik*."

Though he has been part of noise unit Klangorieg since 1987, Kubin is better known for his quirky space-circus music. He released his debut album *Filmusik* on his own label Gagarin Records in 1998. Since then he has made numerous 7"s and EPs, and contributed to a host of compilations on labels such as Diskone, A/Musk, Meeuw Muziek and Sik-sp. Yet his newest release, *Marki Wandalki*, is only his second album of all new material. Cast as schizophrenic pop injected with horror soundtracks and Sun Ra space-travellages, it sounds somewhere between Tippy's quirky merrily-round-minutes, Devo's playful pastiche and Xenakis's sound architecture.

Last autumn saw the release of *The Tatchy Teenage Tapes Of Felix Kubin*, a compilation of youthful experiments from 1981-85. "In my youth I was trained on piano, electric organ and I taught myself to play little box drums," Kubin says. "The Korg MS-20 synthesizer changed my life. I got it when I was 11. The cultural climate was very encouraging. I recorded DAF's hardcore track 'Nachtchorbei' when I was 11. The cultural climate was very encouraging. I recorded DAF's hardcore track 'Nachtchorbei' when I was 11. I listened very early to diaphonic music. At age 13 I was into Ensturzende Neubauten and Throbbing Gristle."

So how does a pre-teen German get into playing DAF and TGF? "My father is a rational atom physicist and my mother an irrational transistor who is fighting with microwaves," Kubin explains. "So, I could combine these two inherited sides of my mind in a synthesizer. Giving the possibility of synthesis helped me to force my brain to collaborate and make bodies. Explanations become physical." That's me told.

Marki Wandalki is not – as some might deduce – a reference to Stock, Haasen & Wälkmen's *Matt Wand*. "It is Polish and means *Vandal Mothers*," Kubin clarifies. "For me it was an answer to *The Mothers Of Invention*, like *The Mothers Of Destruction*. Dangerous German flocks of mothers spraying graffiti, robbing people and destroying subway stations..." The album runs the gamut from high energy hyper hits such as "Hit Me, Provider" to the retro tango waltz of "Fernwarme Wien" – co-written with German new wave electronic pioneer Holger Hiller – which would have made a perfect soundtrack for a Karl Valenka short, had it been written 70 years earlier. The album ends with a hilarious desecrap take of Lionel Ritchie's "Hello": "Hello is it me / I'm looking for, I wonder who I am and I wonder what I do."

"Humour is essential," Kubin emphasises. "It is non-rational cultural communication and it transports a lot of your cultural background. Humour is a poetic form of philosophy, for me even a Weltanschauung [worldview]. I stopped thinking about irony because in Hamburg a lot of culture is based on sarcasm where people are trying to take distance from what they say but after some years you find out that the things they try to make fun of are getting real. So, I say some time and take everything seriously. For the same reason, I like ideologies. They make life more interesting. I always had difficulties with the postmodern 'all points of view' thing. I want to invent, not to quote."

As a leading light of Hamburg's mittleren dodecaspaltist party Kommunistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands in the mid-90s, he fronted the group Liedertief Mantot Honecker, dedicated to playing songs of the former East German Republic. The KED party was headed by Dr Kurt Euler who gave "speeches in a very idiosyncratic language with terms and idioms derived from DDR terminology, old philosophies, Donald Duck and modern business talk", Kubin explains. "We did a lot of performances which consisted of films that we shot, speeches, some rituals and music. We were interested in breaking the German neurotic way of coping with its history: they always want to make things disappear. We got very

strong reactions at our shows, some people screaming, fighting, crying, having nervous breakdowns. We saw ourselves basically like mediums, like catalysers."

Kubin's sample-heavy electropop is often mocked under 'plunderphonic music', along with artists like Neganwind and People Like Us. "My music is not plunderphonic music," he protests. "When I use samples it's mostly samples of my own music and sounds, or of something that I refer to in my musical history." But he does share plunderphonic artists' interest in politics. "The plunderphonic movement tried to be political simply by taking voices of others and not commenting themselves," argues Kubin. "Their comment was the contrast. Since politics have totally left the realm of vision by becoming a management of economies, culture has to replace politics by taking its visionary spirit. That's why art is so important today. Artists have to take the responsibility to change unfixed minds and to give them back a visionary feeling of politics. In the original sense: the matter of the singular citizen in correspondence to society's interest. Culture is not luxury, culture is the new politics in opposition to pure economics."

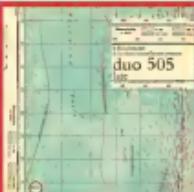
Kubin's interest in surreal dream logic, poetry, broken narrative and noise coexists in his experimental radio plays. "My first radio play in 2001 was called *Syndicate Of Counter-House*, produced for Deutschlandradio Berlin," he says. "It explored a syndicate of noise musicians and theorists who organised in a sabotage ring worldwide. A mixture of documentary, travelling report, pseudo-science, sound collage, manifesto platform. It got quite a lot of airing, which encouraged me to go on."

Recently he premiered a play with Polish artist Wojciech Kucharczyk. "It deals with the German-Polish relationship and takes the piss out of each other's prejudices and pathos," he concludes. "I like to combine fiction and reality/documentation because I think that nowadays the truth lies – a great double-meaning of the word in this context – in between facts and poetry." □ Marki Wandalki is out now on A-Musk, Gagarin records is at [www.gagarinrecords.com](http://www.gagarinrecords.com)

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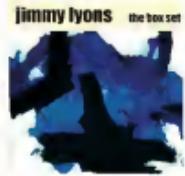
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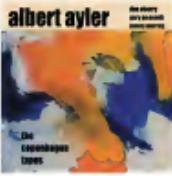
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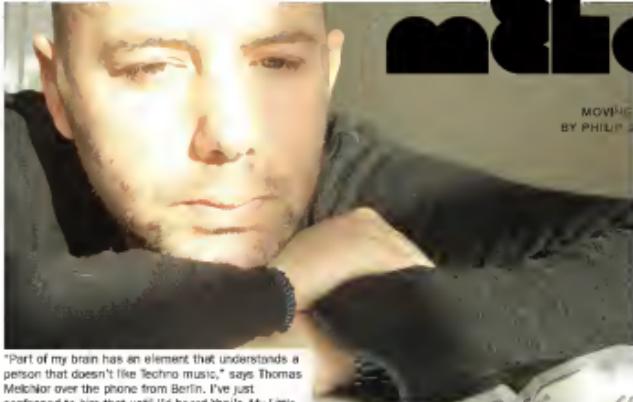
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# Thomas Melchior



MOVING HOUSE  
BY PHILIP HERBURN

"Part of my brain has an element that understands a person that doesn't like Techno music," says Thomas Melchior over the phone from Berlin. "I've just confessed to him that until I'd heard Yoni's 'My Little Yoni,' which Melchior made with Tim Hutton in 1998, I'd harboured an eight-year prejudice against handclaps. In fact, I disliked electronic dance music in general, but programmed handclaps felt particularly phony. But the way Yoni used them, thickly draped over Acid basslines and milky, analogue filigree, handclaps lost their signification and returned to the land of pure noise."

Yoni and Vulva, Melchior's other project with Hutton, weren't the first to do this, of course. One need only look to Trax Records' mid-'80s singles to hear the antecedent — but the duo's facility in subtly tweaking the codified conventions of dance music didn't simply end with the handclaps. They hitched Acid's torque to the engine of synthesizer sound itself, twisting all manner of surfaces into squawking, super-harmonic glimmers. Yoni's handclaps stood out in part because they cut such a stark profile against otherwise silky beaking.

Vulva dissolved in 1997, after two albums for Rephlex and one for Sourtoe, and Melchior assumed a low profile working primarily alongside Peter "Baby" Ford in the duo Soul Capsule. But a string of recent releases, culminating in the album *The Meaning Of Love* for Frankfurt's PlayHouse label, show that Melchior is back at his old trick of re-presenting, mangled genres from a slightly different angle, and perhaps winning a new convert or two in the process.

Melchior's last two 12"s for PlayHouse were stripped down, jacking affairs, but sanded smooth. "I'm a House fan," admits Melchior, citing Chez D'amore and Ron Trent as personal highlights. "I have a weak spot for it. And the more the beat is bumping and grinding, the more I like it." Employing the same amount of empty space as any early Chicago House record, Melchior proceeded to burnish each individual element

to a shine. In the corkscrewing, "Chocaine," an Acid-edged bass glissando is swathed in chorus and delay. What could have been a tiny piano line is similarly softened and muted. The only element left unscrubbed is the vocal hook. It sounds like "S-a-say," but it's truncated — perhaps trailing off into the phrase, "and shit" — in such a way that it's impossible to make out, and becomes pure suggestion. Repeated every few bars and recorded so hot it sports blisters, the refrain cuts through the track to deposit a grimy crackle on its surface. Meanwhile, the dirty eruption keeps the track from lapsing into toothlessness. Likewise, "Taste For You" is a frenetic, trampolining web of drum beats that mimics a samba school's energy without sounding at all like Latin House.

This might not be a coincidence. Many of Melchior's contemporaries in his new home of Berlin, like Ricardo Vilalobos and Lucen N Nipote, have Chilean backgrounds, and for the past eight years or so, they've forged links between Europe and South America, attempting to create a non-datched fusion of Latin polyrhythms and minimal Techno. Now Melchior finds himself spending considerable time in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil; in fact, he's just returned from a stint following the birth of his son there. But Melchior is cautious when it comes to incorporating Brazilian rhythms into his own music. He raves at the variety of rhythms heard in the streets of Salvador, which he describes as kind of "African baroque," but "to translate that onto a minimal level is a bit more challenging".

Melchior identifies himself as a minimalist — in conversation, he uses the term frequently, without apology or qualification. It's the quality that infatuated him with Trent and D'amore's recordings. "In a way their productions are a lot bigger," he says, "in the classical vein of Kevin Saunderson productions, but they've made it sound very small already. It's very muted and un-large. Obviously that's the direction I like — taking the sound and making it basic, having the rhythm

pumping and using certain elements that are in a way traditional, but they work. They can be minimised."

As a minimalist, however, Melchior differs from Vilalobos or Perlen's Parody; his productions incorporate far more traditional hallmarks of House music, be they drum sounds or keyboard stabs. He whittles House with the grain instead of against it, embracing its suppleness and suggestion rather than employing the brittle substitutions that other Microhouse producers use to refreshion four-to-the-floor patterns in the language of clicks and cuts.

This makes *The Meaning Of Love* a very curious album. At first listen, it sounds almost slight. The glowing keyboards, Garage-like skip and hiccuping vocal refrains are so smooth that they barely diverge from traditional Deep House, with all its overdetermined connotations of 'soul' and leisure-culture sensuality. But Melchior's take on the genre is as solid as aerosol — it dissipates before your very ears. For all its grounding as body music, anchored by bass and pulsing rhythm, his version takes its energy from the air.

In "Searching" there's no pedal tone, no resolution — everything is left bobbing like balloons tethered to a wrist drawing circles in space. Random blips fit about the lone constant chord. Vocal stabs nail a minor seventh that hovers on a cushion of air. In tracks like "Que Foi" and "Que Pasa," Melchior is a pointillist, letting whittled down blips stand in for larger ideas. Again and again he suggests melodic and chords that he refuses to lay bare. The result is a state of constant deferral. Refusing to give up the goods, it's far sexier than the stuff that tarts itself up in overblown pads and giddy choruses.

"There's a minimalism of the sound," he concludes, "and a minimalism of the parts." By utilising both, he has left enough of the canvas bare so that even the "disco sucks" crowd might be able to imagine their ideal vision of House music in the blank spaces. □

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# Björn Olsson

DISAPPEARING ACTS  
BY ELISABETH VINCENTELLI



Björn Olsson has been making music for more than 20 years now, yet he still sounds shyly excited that someone would bother to question him about it. "There are not many people calling from abroad," he says after picking up the phone. Of course, he's done interviews before. As a former member of the influential Swedish rock groups Union Carbide Productions and *The Soundtrack Of Our Lives*, Olsson has interacted with press and fans, travelling the world to play shows. But he was a guitarist in those groups, and who ever bothers talking to guitarists? Sure, he has released four solo albums since 1999, but they have been wifely low-key, usually featuring a melancholy whistle that Olsson has made a kind of trademark. His first record, for instance, teeters on the dreamiest edges of psychedelia, a pastoral dreamscape whose *wiegt/blest* (respect) may well be its title, the conversational stringed instrumental-musik... *Att Spänka In I...* *Efter Kanske Att Försväma* /*Instrumental Music...* *To Submerge In...* *Or Disappear Through (Omplattna)*.

Olsson, who lives on the island of Orust, about 35 miles from Gothenburg, modestly says that his musical goal is quite simple. "It's almost like background music," he explains, "but it's not background music. My own music is relaxing for myself. I play acoustic guitar every morning and in the evening, just by myself. I try always to record outside of Gothenburg if possible, in summer houses that I rent or on islands. You're more relaxed, it's easier for that kind of music."

Dr Freud aside, it wouldn't be surprising if Olsson's laidback approach went back to his childhood. "I always say that I'm unresponsible and spoiled because we had everything when I was a kid," he recalls. "My father sold cars so he had a lot of money — we travelled around the world, we had a Rolls Royce. When I left school at 19, music was the only way I

could reach other people." That he did in a spectacular way when he joined Union Carbide Productions, one of the most savage groups Sweden has ever produced. "We felt good and when we had bad reviews we felt even better," he laughs. "I never had any thoughts about how many records we sold; I was only thinking about how great we were as a band."

The guitarist left UCP after their second album. A similar pattern occurred with *The Soundtrack Of Our Lives*, which Olsson co-founded with UCP singer Ebbot Lundberg in 1994, then left after two records. (He recorded some solo material at that time, but shelved it until its self-titled release in 2004.) It's easy to attribute the psychadelic fringe in many *Soundtrack* songs to Olsson, who cowrote them with Lundberg. His contributions to the group's second album, *Extended Reverie For The Psychedelicings Of The Western Civilization*, are obvious hintings of his upcoming solo work. "Jehovah Sunrise," for instance, has a wide-open feel and even features some of Olsson's characteristic whistling.

After emerging from the anonymity of groups with *Instrumentalmusik*, Olsson released *UPA*, his most ambitiously diverse record to date. It veers wildly from the sweetly poppy "Hello!", featuring a Bacharach-style trumpet line, to "Auf Wiedersehen", which taps into traditional Swedish folk. Olsson reminds us of his rocking tendencies with "Tema II", a driving epic full of tempestuous guitars that soars halfway between Krautrock and Japanese psych. *UPA*'s complex jumble of influences was handled by a large cast of guest players. In general, though, Olsson prefers to do things by himself or with a small group of people. His strategy, he explains, is basic: "I didn't pick well-known musicians or extremely good musicians — certain songs don't need..." He trails off, his frustration audible over the phone line as he searches for the right word in English.

"These songs would need a drummer that wasn't that good. I wanted the musicians to play very simply so they wouldn't destroy the motive of the music." It was just such a handpicked ensemble that worked on last year's *Björn Olsson* (aka the crayfish album, to differentiate it from the aforementioned self-titled record, which is named after the crab album; both are on Gravitation).

If the CD is Olsson's most cinematic, you shouldn't read too much into that description. Too often, what's described as "the soundtrack to an imaginary movie" really means music for a bourgeois lifestyle. Olsson's take, however, pays loving tribute to Ennio Morricone and early '70s Swedish Prog master Bo Henson, and wants to encourage flights of the imagination rather than consumption.

Although his own albums have a cultish appeal, Olsson has a healthy career as a producer and guest musician (he's toured with Josh Homme's Spain, for instance), remaining endearingly low-key through it all. Some may call his attitude a self-sabotaging streak — here, after all, is a man who left two groups just as they were on the cusp of achieving success — but that would be to assume commercial success is a desirable goal in itself. For Olsson, it's all a manifestation of his self-deprecating sense of humour as well as a healthy approach to what's important in life, and thus in music. "I've never wanted that much recognition. I've never been that kind of person," he says. "Once I told an interviewer from the Gothenburg Post that my last album was my worst, things like that. He said that other bands call me a great producer and I replied I wasn't that great, I also talked about my divorce. Then there was no article in the newspaper," he laughs, continuing, "it's always been that attitude. "But when I produce I don't have the possibility to destroy anything," he concludes. "I must do the best job I can, and that's also great." □ [www.gravitation.nu](http://www.gravitation.nu)



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# Global Ear: Rennes



IC drummer player Zhu Xiaolong (left) and Tongue at China Music Lab in Rennes

"Jackie Chan" yells one spectator by way of greeting. Chinese Industrial rock group Tongue, whose first set in France has the misfortune to coincide with the French game against Croatia in the Euro 2004 football championship. But Tongue — along with folk group Iz and electro artist Wang Lei, the acts composing China Music Lab — have come too far for barroom banter and football tournaments to throw them off guard.

The China Music Lab Tour constitutes the only official

contemporary musical component of the current year of China in France, yet it's composed of three of the most "unofficial" of Chinese artists. Tongue have achieved a high level of acclaim across China for their combination of poignant lyrics and industrial weight. Their members all come from the majority Han Chinese population and currently live in Beijing — the centre of the Chinese rock scene — but half from Xinjiang, a province at the fringe of the Middle Kingdom, more Central Asian than Chinese. Two members of Tongue also play in Iz, a folk group who employ the traditions of Xinjiang's Kazakh minority, from which another two of its members come. The third component is Wang Lei. Though he now calls Guangzhou (formerly known as Canton) home, he's originally from a small town in Sichuan, where he studied traditional opera and dance before discovering — in chronological order — breakdancing, rock and post-rock, Industrial Metal, and finally dub and electro. His own music fuses electronica with traditional Sichuanese music and opera, and has garnered him earlier gigs and studio time in France and Spain.

The three acts are in France for a seven city tour organised by 86/33 Link (the numbers referring to the telephone codes of China and France), a French association co-founded by Pierre-Alexandre Blanc and Leo de Boissigues, who also opened a Beijing office of the Bureau des Musiques Actuelles (BMA, or Contemporary Music Office) through a contract with

the French embassy to promote French music in China. The cultural exchange work of Blanc and de Boissigues cut both ways. In addition to taking Laurent Garnier, Muriel Moreno and others to China, they have also helped Wang Lei and Iz, among others, to record or play at home and abroad.

The tour's first stop, Rennes, already has a global reputation as an international music city. 25 years ago Jean-Louis Brossard and friends launched Transmusicales, which quickly became one of Europe's leading annual music festivals. A new Snopphile, Brossard has visited China twice in the past year, drawn to the music that is slowly being recognised outside the Middle Kingdom or, for that matter, inside it. In December 2003, he brought Long Kuan and Supermarket — a Beijing punk turned solo singer and China's earliest electronic group — to Transmusicales. Brossard also set up the city's premier venue, Club Ubu, which is tonight playing host to China Music Lab.

If the crowd's amazement of the music coming out of China is significant, it pales in comparison to the Chinese musicians' incredulity at their treatment at the venue. What the folks at Club Ubu might consider the little things — working monitors, telemedics technicians, dressing rooms — are the stuff of fantasy for the Chinese. For instance, the backstage area in Beijing often means a table out front from which patrons need to be evicted before the musicians can occupy it. "Backstage here, there's food, booze and towels!" exclaims Tongue drummer Li Dan. "How great is that?" "I don't know about how it was in front of the stage," adds Iz percussionist Guo Zhuanshang, "but on stage it was amazing. I've never felt so comfortable."

When Tongue hit the stage, the Euro match has yet to end. If the crowd could have been larger, they could not have been more supportive. Their enthusiasm has a direct effect on the group, who are left downright

giddy by their reception. Singer Wu Tun's habitual pose of standing at 90 degrees to the crowd seems especially cold and distant on this evening.

But while heads turn to Tongue's Industrial strength (if a tad outstated) rock, Iz's traditional folk blows minds. That afternoon, Rennes's citizens had their first chance to catch Iz at electronics and CD superstore Fnac, where all of the group's CDs were scooped up. At Club Ubu the same evening, the quintet begin slowly, but soon have the entire room transfixed. "It's amazing the effect their music has on people," says one audience member. "You can feel it here, in your pulses."

Sadly, Iz left the tour after only a week, as planned, but as Ubu's Broosard says, "It was a great way to close out the season." He's referring to the annual summer-long hiatus taken by his club — and most of France. "It's a album [yet to find official distribution] is my favourite of the year," he adds, hinting that Iz might play at this year's Transmusicales.

The crowd signal their appreciation of Iz with their silent concentration. By contrast, constant whooping and hollering punctuates Wang Lei's set. If his subtle references to ancient Chinese music are lost on most of the crowd, he communicates well enough through the more modern elements of his compositions, which range from dub to Techno and all points in between.

After China Music Lab, Wang's schedule took in a date at Paris's Fête De La Musique — alongside video artiste Bowing Club in the gardens of the Palais Royal. He also spent a week with Lyon dub crew Hightone, preparing new material to perform in Ghérons and at Eurokeeness, a massive rock festival in Belfast, before going on to perform three dates in Ireland en route back to China. He'll return to France this autumn to record new material by himself and with Hightone. "For my music, I need to come to France," he declares. □





## Noah Creshevsky

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# chRIS WATSON

TESTED BY MIKE BARNES PHOTOS BY JOHN HOOPER

**Chris Watson's fascination with recording**  
sound dates back to his pre-teens days with a portable reel-to-reel recorder, but was first heard publicly in 1978 on Cabaret Voltaire's debut recording *Extended Play*. A box set, *Methodology 1974-78: Attic Tapes*, released in 2003 on Mute, shows that the group had been extensively recording in Watson's loft well before that date. In fact, they started in earnest in 1973, although Watson and colleagues Stephen Mallinder and Richard H. Kirk had been collaborating since 1972. Cabaret Voltaire's heyday came in the late 70s and early 80s, when their experimental approach crossed over from industrial music into aggressive post-punk blasts such as the single "Nag Nag Nag". Watson left in late 1981 having worked on the albums *Mix-Up*, *The Voice Of America* and *Red Mecca*.

From 1981-87 he worked as a sound recordist for Tyne Tees Television and later for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. During this period he was also constructing tape collages with Andrew Mackenzie in The Hafler Trio. Since then he has worked extensively in film, TV and radio as a freelance recordist, specialising in natural history and documentary. These projects have included David Attenborough's acclaimed BBC TV series *The Life Of Mammals* and *The Life Of Birds*, for which he received a BAFTA award for Best Factual Sound.

Since 1996 Watson has released three solo albums of wildlife and environmental recordings for Touch: *Stepping Into The Dark, Outside The Circle Of Fire* and *Weather Report*. 2002's *Star Switch On* features recordings based on his work by artists including Biosphere, Philip Jeck, AER and Miika Vainio, and Watson reconfiguring his own raw sonic material.

Since 1994 he has been a partner in the group Hol Pollo Film & Video Recording. Watson also lectures and is involved in performance and installation work, his current project being Sound Oasis at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City. Based on sounds of Mexican railways, it runs from 29 September (info: [www.noiselab.com](http://www.noiselab.com)).

Appropriately enough, the Jukebox was itself a field recording. It took place on Dunstanborough Beach, about an hour's drive up the coast from Watson's Newcastle home.

## ROXY MUSIC

### "THE BOB (MEDLEY)"

FROM ROXY MUSIC ISLANDS 1972

[Opening synth pulses] It's a very familiar sound. [Vocals start] Fantastid Roxy Music. Is it "2HB"? Close? It's "The Bob". Great track, I haven't heard this for 20 years. This stuff was a huge influence, I love it - it has that beautiful, seductive sound quality with Andy Mackay's sax and oboe mixed in with this really fantastic electronic music, synthesizer music from Eno. Seductive is the best way I can describe it.

A lot of people liked Eno's non-musically approach - that you didn't need to be Keith Emerson.

Yeah, interestingly he didn't really play the keyboards. It was just a device for controlling the instrument, which is something I had a go at. I ended up with a very similar synthesizer, made by the same company as he used, a now deceased English company called EMS. I built a homemade synthesizer when Cabaret Voltaire first kicked off and then I found enough money to buy one of these EMS AKS synthesizers, which had this beautiful two and a half octave keyboard painted onto plastic. It had no moving parts, it was controlled by capacitance in the way that Eno used his VC33.

It was such a great sound, it was a breath of fresh air to us all at the time, myself, Mel [aka Steve Mallinder] and Richard Kirk [later of Cabaret Voltaire] and our wider circle of friends. I remember reading the reviews of the first album that said it was great but had really bad production. I never could understand that: I thought all the tracks sounded great.

One of the things that drew [Cabaret Voltaire] together was seeing Roxy Music live, I've still got the poster at home, which is why I know the date - 10 November 1972 at Sheffield University, one of the Halls of Residence called Ramnor. A tiny gig, around 100 people there. It wasn't Cabaret Voltaire then, but a loose association of friends and like-minded individuals who used to hang around together, make recordings and play them back. We were all interested in other things than what we were being fed at the City Hall and on the radio, and on record.

Were you ever a 'proper' keyboard player?

I was. I was never interested in playing a musical instrument in that sense. It was a good way to control some of the sounds we were producing. It never really appealed to me at all. It wasn't a case of wanting a short cut, it was just doing it in a way that was different. I was interested in going against what was still a 70s convention and also couldn't be arsed to practise in order to produce sound that had already been produced, or to rearrange that in another way. Without sounding too grand, I think we were all more interested in the greater aspects of the music rather than the minutiae of whether we could play or not [laughs]. We knew what we wanted to do at the time.

## RICHARD HUELSENBECK

### "INVENTING DADA"

FROM FUTURISM AND DADA REVIEWED (SUB ROSA) 1968

So it's someone talking about Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara? Can I have another guess if it's not him? Fantastic, I've never heard it, whatever it is, it's Richard Huelsenbeck, German writer and poet, and one of the original dadaists.

I used to like Performance Cancelled, a group from the Cabaret Voltaire. They'd organise concerts and used to write "Performance Cancelled" horizontally across the poster. Then they would turn up and do it.

Was dada an influence, or was Cabaret Voltaire simply a neat name to use for a group?

No, it was a massive influence, because we were all

interested in the history of art and we all seemed to come across it more or less at the same time. And the more we explored it, we couldn't believe people were getting up to this stuff in the early part of the 20th century, when it would have been genuinely outrageous and clearly unique, and also highly creative as well. I love that association of poets, musicians, artists, writers - a free flow of information in somewhere like a cafe. We used to hang out a lot in pubs in Sheffield and just sit and talk - not about higher things like art - but there was an exchange of ideas. The more I looked into the history of it, the more I found it compelling and fascinating, I loved the humour and I loved the darkness of it as well, it just seemed perfect for us to lift the name, it spoke for us very well.

Why did you leave the group?

Because I knew there was something else that I wanted to do and it was very, very difficult. I still think about it. But I was getting increasingly unhappy and dissatisfied about what was going to happen. I could see us going more down the road of signing a record deal and we'd never intended to do that, really. It was just that old thing of 'revive into style' that did concern me genuinely at the time, and there were other things I was quite keen to explore. It was quite a selfish - or solo - thing I was interested in and I introduced some elements of those using tape recordings into our work, which I thought was quite successful. But one of the key things was, I remember we had a connection with Soft Cell and when "Tainted Love" got to number one, we got invited to the Top Of The Pops studios. I spent a day or so in amongst all that nightmare and thought, 'This really is bollocks, I never want to be part of this'. I felt quite shocked and upset about it. So that really made me start thinking about alternatives. There weren't really any tensions within the group, we were still more or less headed in the same direction, but it's a difficult thing to decide, I still don't know if I did the right thing or not, you always think, 'What if?'.

## WILLIAM BURROUGHS

### "THE SAINTS GO MARCHING THROUGH ALL THE POPULAR TUNES"

FROM NOTHING HERE NOW BUT THE RECORDINGS, WILLIAM BURROUGHS: FANTASTIC, 1974

Nothing Here Now But The Recordings, William Burroughs. Fantastic. I was so pleased when Genesis [P-Orridge] got this out and brought this stuff all together. So syrupy and so chilling, the voice. What do you think about Burroughs's later recordings with people like Bill Laswell - do you think music was a good medium for him?

I don't really, no. You couldn't really improve on what he did in literature. I liked his ideas in *Electronic Revolution* about his use of tape recording techniques, but as for crossing over into music, it was an interesting diversion but had nowhere near the power of his text, or indeed his spoken word, or this [referring to blast of noise punctuating speech]. This is perfect, and I guess this is music. I was always interested in his street recordings in Tangier. And recording and playing things back in the streets as well. Which again is something we had done before Cabaret Voltaire. Without anywhere to perform, we would make recordings and play them out of the back of a van when we were driving round Sheffield. And it was great then discovering that someone like Burroughs had also done it.

With Mel and his vocals, that was a technique that was definitely applied even though it was more about free association than actual cutting up bits of voices. We did a couple of experiments where we actually cut up the multitrack tape, which was less successful, but

it was something to investigate, which we did all the time. It was exciting to try and see what these things would reveal. I still like that, the subliminal aspects of sound; I don't think that's been fully explored at all.

#### ANNEA LOCKWOOD

"LAKE TEAR OF THE CLOUDS, MT MARCY - THE SOURCE, ELEVATION 4322 FEET, JUNE 19, 1982 AT 2PM"

FROM A SOUND MAP OF THE HUDSON RIVER  
(LOVED MUSIC) 1992

I don't immediately recognise it but I like the sound. I'd say it was recorded in the New World, North America.

It was indeed.

I'm just trying to narrow it down. It sounds relatively unprocessed so I would say Gordon Hempton, Doug Quin or Bernie Krause, perhaps Hildegard Westerkamp. I've not heard it before, it's very well recorded whoever did it, a beautiful section of sound. It's Annea Lockwood's *A Sound Map Of The Hudson River*. She's a musician, composer and sound artist. I know her name, I don't know the piece.

With your recordings, how much do you try and get a flavour of an overall environment, and how much is it about discrete phenomena that took place at a specific location and time?

I like to hang out in a place if I can. I like to spend time there, I like to explore it, and I like to go round and listen. The easy analogy is it's rather like landscape photography. I first of all wander around without any gear because it's quite heavy, and then I go back, usually out-of-hours, like very early morning or through the night. So then I spend time there recording and listening, moving the microphones around. It's quite time-consuming, but that's by far the best way to do it. It sounds a bit odd, but I sometimes do some research beforehand on the social history and geography of the place because that can affect how it sounds as well. A lot of what I do is revealing sounds, but also revealing something of the place, because it's tied up with the history and the geography – and that's reflected in the animals as well.

What was the project where you were testing the acoustics of ancient burial chambers?

I worked on a programme for Radio 4 called *Stone Age Sound*, but it wasn't my project. It is believed that a lot of megalithic tombs like Maes Howe in Orkney and Newgrange in Ireland have special acoustics and they didn't just happen – they were designed, so that people making music or vocalising in there could set up standing waves, which can then have significant psychological effects. It appears to amplify itself and it also has a ventriloquial quality, so sound can appear to emanate from places where there are no people.

Field recordings often capture unique unrepeatable events within continuous processes...

Yes, like the sound of the sea. What I'm also interested in is when things have been recorded and presented on CD, you then have a chance to listen to it properly rather than walking past and sort of hearing it. It can have tremendous depth and content or it can be just nice to put on when you are making the tea. The first thing I did on *Touch, Stepping Into The Dark*, was quite simple... recordings of places that I thought had particular significance as well as having a remarkable sound. And by playing them back, it was very much an experiment to see if any of the effects, the consequences of being there and listening, could be reproduced. I think some of them can – a lot of us have feelings of a room or a house that has an atmosphere, the sound of that place contributes a lot to how we feel about it.

#### Like the acoustics of a train station?

Yeah, the installation I'm doing at the moment in Mexico City [Sound Case] is based on sounds of the Mexican railway system, rather than any natural environment, it's completely urban industrial environment. Although there are periods of quiet and stillness in the desert, they are always broken by the thunderous rumble of a massive diesel engine bearing down upon you. But some recordings I made there in very reverberant acoustics, in railway stations, one in Vera Cruz. You only need to hear two or three seconds and all of us would know what place it was. We immediately have a mental image.

#### VARIOUS (RECORDED BY MARK GERRIS)

"VIP DINNER KNIVES AND THE SONGBIRDS OF AL HARAMAIN"/"WINGED AND WINDED RECEPTIONS"

FROM A REMASTERED 1994 (SUBLINE PRODUCTIONS) 9004

Is this commercially available? I wish I'd got it. I love hearing Arabic. There's so many people who have done stuff like this, even going back to Holger Czukay and his radio sounds.

It's a sonic patchwork of street sounds, radio, TV and interviews from Syria. It's on the *Sun City Girls*' *Sublime Frequencies* label.

It's fantastic. I'll get the catalogue number as well. When you used Middle Eastern sounds on *Cabaret Voltaire's Three Mantras in 1980*, were they from a commercial recording rather than one of your own? A friend of ours had gone to Israel and some other parts of the Middle East and bought me back an audio cassette. I thought it was great. This is too. I love that sort of thing, it's so effective. I was working with Justin Bennett the other week and he gave me a couple of his CDs, including a little CD single, *The Mosques Of Tangier*, which is incredibly atmospheric. Beautiful record. The artwork's lovely, and a great sound. Also he did something in an apartment in Beirut, which is another place I've recorded and it was magical, like this. This is turning into a real education,

#### STEVEN FELD

"GALO AFTERNOON"

FROM WILDFOREST SONOMA 45: AMBIENCES OF 80505A, PAPUA NEW GUINEA / EARTH CAR 2021

It's quite a strange experience listening to this in some sand dunes in Northumbria.

I like displaced sounds, yeah. Well, it's a recording from the Tropics. That's a sort of gaseous hiss of cicadas, the deep beat of pigeons or doves and that beautiful whooping. It could be Madagascar; they could be gibbons. It's not easy to tell if it's Africa, Asia or South America. Let me think... It sounds like an unprocessed recording. It sounds to me like it's Madagascar or South East Asia, so it could be one of the [John C] Roche series of CDs. Just give me another minute. It's a good track, a good recording. It's got a really nice richness to it. It could be one of Hildegard Westerkamp's pieces but I don't think she's ever been to South East Asia. [Looks at CD sleeve] So I was right about the area. I like those large scale macro environments, especially played on those wider angle, larger stereo systems because they become very otherworldly. It also amplifies elements like the rhythm and the dynamics, they become very powerful and so bizarre – you couldn't make music like that. I really like that Cagean attitude, that there's enough sound out there without the need to make any more music – it's just a case of capturing some of it. What techniques do you use to record wildlife close up rather than in a soundscape like this?

It's a bit like stalking something or hunting, you really need to get to know the subject. It's so rewarding when you get that close-up detail of sound because so much is revealed, things you wouldn't normally have the opportunity of hearing. And I like the combination of the two: the wide-angle perspective of places that really intimate detail, where all the rhythms and textures are revealed.

How did you place the microphones in your recording on *Outside The Circle Of Fire*?

I'd been after that recording for two or three years. I'd seen it happening at a distance and often wondered, as with a lot of those close-up sounds on that CD, what it sounded like being in amongst it and what it would be like being in there – that's the most extreme example. We were out one morning in Kenya's Masai Mara doing general recording, and we came across this zebra carcass, which must have been killed by lions in the night. It was quite early on so it wasn't that hot, 10,000 feet above were a group of vultures circling. They had obviously seen it, but they are very wary and it takes some time for them to come down. So I quickly took the opportunity and used some little nylon cable ties and tied some tiny cable microphones to the ribs. I buried the body of the microphone and buried the cable and then ran 60-odd metres of cable and sat and waited. So once you've done that, put the work in, you really just have to wait for four or five hours. By then it was really hot so the whole thing was full of flies, which added to it.

I like the proximity of things like that. I'm not usually anthropomorphic about animals but vultures sound exactly as we imagine them to – the calls they make sound like bursts of guitar feedback and then this sort of threatening hissing and breathing, and powerful wing flaps, so it's a very oppressive, smother and horrifying environment. I did a talk at my kids' secondary school and the middle school when they were about eight or nine. I played that track and said, "If you are ever going to be eaten alive by vultures, these are the last sounds that you will ever hear," and then played the track. Three of them burst into tears.

After I flew back from Kenya, my cameraman colleague picked me up at Heathrow. We had a couple of political interviews for a straight TV documentary. We had to interview some Whitehall mandarin, and because it was a press conference we didn't have much time to record it properly. I just got my personal mics out and I remember clipping one to the lapel of his pristine suit and I could see bits of dried blood and hair, and zebra viscera stuck to this microphone. He was sat there throughout the interview and I thought, "If you knew the last place that microphone had been we would all be chucked out" [laughs].

#### BASIL KIRCHIN

"CHARCOAL SKETCH TWO"

FROM CHARCOAL SKETCHES (MUSICA 1990)

[After a few notes of exotic bird, guitar and flute] I really hate it, whatever it is. No, stop it. It's dreadful. This is Basil Kirchin. Do you know his music?

I've heard the name and I may even have his LP. This is just so bad. It's everything I don't like. It's a strange mix of what sounds like slowed down birdsong and some ghastly quartet of meaningless nonsense. The music sounds like a prelude to a 1970s porn film – an accidental meeting in a country lane between a window cleaner and some woman who's broken down. I can't be unkind enough about things like this, they're so wide of the mark. After my initial horror, it's quite funny. Kirchin was keen that his music should sound more organic than *musique concrète*.

I've got a vinyl record of his somewhere. Words Within Words. Something tells me I thought it was OK.

**Did your work in The Helfier Trio take a similar approach towards the organic quality of tape music?**

There were a lot of tape collages, which is what we were interested in at the time, when I first got together with Andrew Mackenzie. It was a great time to be doing it and we were getting somewhere. It was a short time but it was exciting. There were a lot of recordings that we made and a lot of material we manipulated and I suppose that's the best word for it, because it was nearly all analogue then. It was all based around ideas that we were currently interested in as well, maybe current things but using old techniques. It was certainly pre-digital, which sounds astonishing to be able to say that you've lived through that era. But I used to love that process.

**How did you become a sound recordist?**

I always was. My parents bought me my first reel-to-reel tape recorder when I was 11, a small Japanese portable. They set me off. When I'd gone round the house recording everything from my mum in the kitchen to our budgie singing, to squeaking doors, the toilet flushing, things like that, I realised it was a portable recorder so I could take it outside. We had a little bird table in the back garden at home in Sheffield and I remember always looking out through the window and seeing the birds feeding but just dying to know what it sounded like. Of course, you could never be there because you would frighten everything away. So this was a fantastic opportunity. I remember putting some bird seed down, then fixing this little microphone to the bird table, turning it on, running inside and pressing my face up against the window and seeing all this activity next to the microphone. Then running out, frightening everything off and coming back and putting the tape on, and I was just taken into this other world and it was just a beautiful experience. I started working with sound recording and thought of the musical possibilities. I just carried on and gradually got more drawn towards recording sounds.

**MIRA CALIX**

**"NUNU" (EXTRACT)**

FROM NUNU EP (WARPP 3003)

Lots of interesting insects. [Loop starts] Oh dear, what's that? It's not as offensive as Basil Kirchin, but it's a collection of mixed cicada and cricket recordings, with some Ambient music. But I don't know who it is. It's *Mira Calix*, part of a piece commissioned by the Natural History Museum in Geneva.

I don't know why people feel it's necessary to put music... Those insect sounds are far more interesting. Is it the novelty of field recordings that appeals to some people?

I'm sure, yeah. But it's been around a long time. I've just been doing this soundscape recording course with CMMFA [Contemporary Music Making For Amateurs] and doing a bit of research. A cellist on the course who specialises in Baroque music wanted to get some recordings he could use with his playing. I took a 78 rpm disc from 1936, the first recorded example of a soundscape that I could find. It was a cellist called Miss Beatrice Harrison accompanying a nightingale in her back garden in Oxford, Surrey. I think it was one of the first outside broadcasts the BBC made. Pretty cool for 1936. I also really like a recording made of nightingales on the south coast nearly a decade later, there's a whole fleet of German bombers crossing the channel to bomb London as a nightingale sings in this orchard – a nightingale accompanied by the Luftwaffe. It's a stunning mix of an incredible birdsong and this hell that's about to fall out of the skies. □

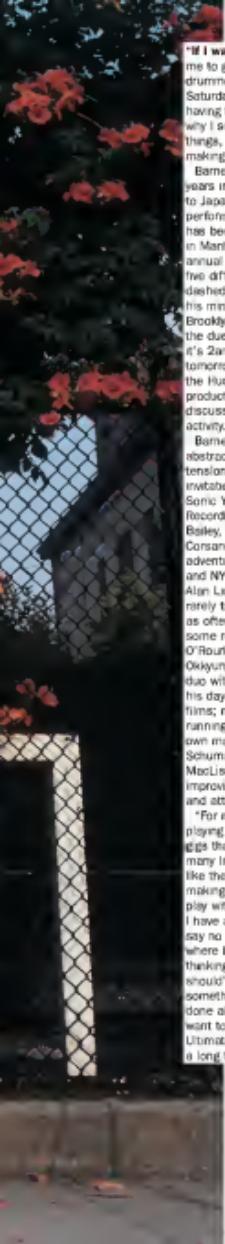


SOUND DESIGNER BY DAY AND NOISE EXPLORER BY NIGHT, DRUMMER TIM BARNES HAS THROWN CONSTANT PERFORMING, DAILY STUDIO WORK, AND HABITUAL GLOBE HOPPING, INFILTRATED EVERY CORNER OF UNDERGROUND MUSIC: FROM NEW YORK TO EUROPE TO JAPAN, HIS ADVENTURES WITH ROCK LINE-UPS, JAZZ OUTSIDERS, IMPROV ENSEMBLES AND DOWNTOWN TURNTABLISTS HAVE QUIETLY MADE HIM ONE OF THE MOST HYPERACTIVE MUSICIANS IN THE WORLD.

WORDS: MARD MASTERS PHOTOS: KAREEM BLACK

# BLOOD ON THE TRAPS





"If I waited for someone to put out my records, or pay me to go play in Japan, I'd still be waiting," asserts drummer Tim Barnes, still energetic after a midnight Saturday night. "I get really impatient - I don't like having things in the hands of someone else. That's why I scrounge around all the time doing so many things, because there's too much to do to sit around making excuses."

Barnes's driven impatience has made his past few years inhumanly busy, encompassing numerous trips to Japan and Europe, along with near-nightly performances in his home city of New York. Tonight, he has been especially hectic. At 8pm he played at Tonic in Manhattan, helping close out another of John Zorn's annual improvisation weeks (Barnes participated in five different sets during this year's stint). At 9:30, he dashed to Soho to swap some equipment, then jetted his minivan over the Williamsburg Bridge, arriving at Brooklyn's Free 103.9 radio station in time to back up the dueling guitars of Atlanta duo San Agustin. Now it's 2am, and because he's flying to Brussels tomorrow for a two-week tour, he's driven back over the Hudson River to his office inside the film production company Lost Planet, postoring sleep to discuss the inspirations behind his relentless musical activity.

Barnes's wide drumming style, which can dart from abstract freedom to rock structure to near-silent tension. Is the span of a beat, has earned him invitations to play with an enormous list of musicians: Sonic Youth and Improv folk pioneers Tower Recordings, Improv veterans like Zorn and Derek Bailey, hokeminded drum experimenters like Chris Corsano and Wilco's Glenn Kotche, international adventurers like Tetuzi Akiyama and Dean Roberts, and NYC stalwarts like guitarist and Wire collaborator Alan Licht and percussionist Sean Meheen. Barnes rarely turns down a chance to play, supporting others as often as he leads gigs of his own. He even has some recurring groups, including a trio with Jim O'Rourke and Ikuo Mori, The TOT Tri, with cellist Okkyung Lee and turntablist Toshio Kawamura, and a duo with Kotche that has produced two albums. Add his day job as a sound designer for commercials and films; mastering work on archival Henry Flyer CDs; running the Quakeskin label, which releases his own material as well as records by Kotche, Michael Schumacher and Velvet Underground drummer Angus MacLise, and Barnes's life has become one massive improvisation, a constant barrage of quick decisions and attentive reactions.

"For me it's very important that I'm not always playing someone else's gig, that I always have some gigs that are my own," he explains. "There are so many little scenes within improvised music, and I feel like the best scene is your own scene, where you're making the decisions about where to play and who to play with. It's tough to say no when someone asks and I have a free date. But I've learned it is important to say no sometimes. I've gotten myself into situations where I walk away hating my own playing, rather than thinking maybe I shouldn't have played. Maybe I should've gone home and watched a movie, or done something other than play. Sometimes I think, 'I've done all these things, but where am I? Where do I want to be this time next year?' I don't know. Ultimately, the process is the goal. I was in bands for a long time, and I love not being in one permanent

bond. I learn so much from everyone that I play with." The range of Barnes's playing has been fully tested tonight. During Zorn's event, which is run like a street basketball game, with Zorn calling on various musicians and then picking different combinations to play short sets, Barnes participates in three of them. Diving in and out of his kit, he concocts a crackling cloud with his demented physical playing. In a quartet led by Zorn, Barnes is especially impressive, as his short spurts of air-punching seem to grow out of Zorn's whining runs. "Zorn's such an intense player, he brings things out of you," says Barnes. "And he can be pretty humorous too."

"There's that idea that the people that you play with bring you up to another level," he continues, "and playing with him, that's really been the case. Every time you step on stage, he's totally locked in and you have to go up a level, because you're playing with John Zorn."

Less than an hour later, sitting behind San Agustin's David Daniell and Andrew Burmes in Brooklyn, Barnes strains his inventions into a more fluid torrent, on a smaller drumset than the one he used with Zorn. His rolling storm punctuates the guitarists' rhythmic playing, yet also pushes them outward to new vistas of structured freedom. "You have to know when to do something straight and when to do something more abstract, something that stretches what that music is all about," states Barnes. "I try to bring different instruments every time I play. There are some improvisors that sort of stick to their thing, and you know before you see them they're probably going to do this. People that have seen me a lot probably say, 'Oh, he's grabbing the glass dish again. He's bowing that same cymbal.' But I try to stay away from that."

"I'm trying to reevaluate the instrument, make it something other than what it is," he continues, "so when you hear it, you don't immediately recognize it as a drum. Both Glenn Kotche and Sean Meheen have taught me so much about the science of drums, and about preparing a drum. Glenn makes these insane drum heads with contact mics and springs coming out of them. I have this snare drum that I took the top head off, and one of the connectors that keep the snare taut to the drum had broken off. And I played it one day, and found all these different sounds, and it was great. I look at a drum as something that just resonates sound, whether you're singing through it, or strumming the snare on it, or whatever. There's so many sounds that you can get out of a drum that really have nothing to do with striking it with a stick."

Barnes started playing drums as a kid in Southern California, learning standard surf beats before his family moved to New York as a teen. "Moving to a totally new place was the best drum lesson ever, because I didn't know anyone," he declares. "I would go down to the basement, put on headphones, listen to The Who and The Byrds, and play along with them. That was when my playing ability increased quite a bit."

He eventually joined Ditzchooker, a New York group that landed briefly on a major label during the post-Nirvana frenzy of the mid-90s. The rock experience helped stretch his playing. "A lot of the songs we wrote came out of improvising," he explains.

"Someone would have an idea and we'd just take it and play. It was based on the same concepts that one would have if an improvisor came in the room and



started playing a riff. The difference was that we would go back and cut it down to a three minute pop song. But the ideas were same: listening, deciding, when it's good to play and not play, when to change the parts, and all that."

After Dachemake broke up, Barnes soon dished toward even freer territories, but he kept one foot in the rock world, drumming with Jim O'Rourke, Royal Trux's Neil Haggerty and Silver Jews. "The thing that's benefited me most with my rock background is just listening," asserts Barnes. "Not that free improvisers don't listen, but when you're playing tunes you're listening to all the parts and the overall sound, and I think it's that sensitivity that helps me a lot when I improvise. Even back when I was a kid, sound was more interesting to me than the idea of playing free, or playing notes. My dad had a Diatophone, and I used to create my own radio commercials and movie trailers with it. When I first heard my own voice on a tape recorder, I was mesmerized. That was an early introduction to sound."

Sound has remained the guiding force behind Barnes's work. More than concerns of pitch, melody or genre, he is fascinated by tone and timbre. This outlook began with his sound design work at *Lost Planet*, which is owned by Hank Corwin, editor of numerous *Oliver Stone* scores. "Hank is a heavily sound-based editor," he says. "He doesn't cut a frame of film without a huge palette of sound. So this has been another level of learning. Before I ever played improv, I was in a room here, taking forks and spoons and cymbals and rubbing them together, turning them into birds flying out of a bush. Hank will ask me to make a sound for something like footage of grass growing, or blood flowing through veins. So I have to interpret what that sound would be. I've really become in tune with a whole new level of the world, experiencing action and sound frame by frame. These investigations have greatly effected how I create my music."

Ideas explored as a sound designer fuelled Barnes's ever-evolving theories, but putting them into practice came later. It started when he met the free-thinking musician Matt Valentine of *Tower Recordings*, whose forthcoming final album Barnes has just put the finishing production touches. "I was a big *Tower* fan, and Matt was looking for a percussionist to play a show with his side project [MV's] *Holoscanner*," he recounts. "I literally met him the night we were playing, right before we went on stage. I told him I loved the new *Tower* record, and he said, 'Great... anyway, here's what we want to do tonight.' And we went on stage and did it. For me, that was it. I knew I wanted to continue doing that kind of thing."

Barnes quickly became ensconced in New York's improvising scene, playing primarily at Tonic, the Lower East Side mecca that has become ground zero for the city's avant garde. "Toshio Kajiwara really brought me into the Tonic circle," he asserts. "He invited me to play at Phonomena [the weekly free music night Kajiwara runs with DJ Olive] quite a few times." Kajiwara remains one of Barnes's most frequent collaborators, and their association led to one of Quakebasket's most visceral releases, *A Water's Wake*. Taken from a 2002 Tonic show featuring Barnes, Kajiwara and turntablist Marlene Rosenfeld, the album is a massive exploration of

texture and space that grows larger with each listen. "I had just met Marlene that night, it was her gig," says Barnes. "Joshio and Marlene set up in front of the stage facing each other, and I was the only one actually on stage. So I could look down and watch them, and see all of their moves and when they were switching records. It was like on a cooking show, where they have a mirror above them so you can see everything they're doing. After I heard the recording, every time I saw either one of them, I wouldn't say 'Do you want to make a release out of this?' I would say, 'We have to make a release out of this.'

Considering all the gigs he's played, Barnes has released relatively few of his own performances on Quakebasket and other labels. "I try to get my recordings out there right after they're recorded, because you change," he explains. "You're always learning new stuff, and you're always thinking and rethinking music. When you record a performance, if you put it out much later, you have to say, 'This is what I did last year, it doesn't really represent what I'm doing now.' It's that kind of thing I want to stay away from." Reflecting Barnes's in-the-moment approach to playing music and arranging his life, such urgency and immediacy guided his only solo release to date, 2003's subtle, sparkling *All Acoustics*. "I was here one night and no one was around, and I set up a couple of mics over there," he says, pointing toward the *Last Planet* lobby. "I ended up playing for about 20 minutes, and I listened to it right away, and decided to do it again and put the two together and call it a record. I also decided I had to master it and have it for sale at [Manhattan record store] Mondo Kim's by the end of the next week. I don't think I quite made that deadline, but within two weeks, I was out hawking it." The two tracks on *All Acoustics* bridge sound and silence, filling the album's wide-open air with hand slaps, cymbal bowing and other inspired object manipulation. Most impressive is the recording's rest-time, documentary feel. You can practically hear Barnes's grey matter shifting and readjusting, his drum sounds serving as physical representations of the internal decisions he's making. He explains, "I don't spend a lot of time practising, but I do a lot in my head, just thinking, 'What would this sound like?' And then I'll sit down and see what happens with an idea, and that'll usually lead to other things by accident."

The don't-look-book attitude of *All Acoustics* applies to most releases on Quakebasket, as Barnes is more concerned with releasing great music than marketing it to the masses. "I don't run Quakebasket like a record label. I get the records out there, but I don't do a lot of press or anything like that," he admits. "People that want these records will find them, and I don't want to really push it on anyone." Even the label's name reflects Barnes's musical philosophies. "I was camping in Montana in 1992, and I was thinking about what I liked about music. The thing I always come back to was this idea of dynamics, having something that's really heavy yet really quiet in whatever I do. And I started thinking about words in the same way. And that's how I came up with Quakebasket, which has both a destructive feeling, and a crushing, maternal sort of thing, put together."

While all Quakebasket releases are worthwhile, Barnes's unearthing of previously unheard recordings by the late Angus MacLise holds special significance. MacLise's musical adventures after leaving *The Velvet*

Underground are legendary, but little recorded evidence was available until a long string of encounters led Barnes to MacLise's lifelong friend, poet and film maker Ira Cohen. "Ira told me all these stories about what he and Angus had done together, and he was really excited about someone putting Angus's stuff out," recalls Barnes. "He gave me Angus's soundtrack to his film *Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda*, and three reels of different bits and pieces that Angus had given him. Angus would just make stuff and give it to film makers to use however they wanted." Barnes has since released three CDs of MacLise's starting music, which has in turn influenced his own work. "It's hard not to be influenced by Angus," he avers. "He was a consummate experimentalist, and he experimented within very simple means. There's a feedback piece on the second CD where he's whirling a mic in the air, with his feet-to-reel machine cranked up to ten, and creating this amazing noise. He was definitely into the destruction of sound. On one reel he says, 'I'd love to get up in a concert hall, a big place like the Fillmore or something, with a guitar that's already smashed, and start the performance like that.' People still think of him as just a drummer, and that's why I've included his noise pieces and conceptual things on the CDs, to show that he didn't just play bongos or handdrums. His music was much deeper and more intense than that."

As much of a New York fixture as Barnes has become, he also plays frequently outside of the US. His favourite destination is Japan, where he's established a growing network of sympathetic collaborators. His closest colleague there is Tetsu Akiyama, an experimental guitar and electronics artisan. "What Tetsu and I are both trying to do with sound is very similar," he says. "He's very percussive with his instruments, and I try to reach for texture and tone with mine. He's also a big rock fan. He can tell you a lot about The Pretty Things or lots of heavy rock bands. And that comes through in his playing."

A stint through Japan in the winter of 2003 with Akiyama and trumpeter Masayasu Etoku resulted in *Future*, a live release on Quakebasket. "It was freezing cold outside, and we played at this really small cafe in Osaka, and it just felt really good," says Barnes. "The thing I love about playing in Japan is that the appreciation level is a lot higher. People there ask me fairly heavy questions about why I'm using this symbol the way I'm using it, or what I'm thinking about when I'm improvising. It's really encouraging."

All the travels and activities Barnes juggles would score most mortals. Already his future includes recordings with Meethan, the TOT trio, Basque experimentalist Martin and UK amplified texturist Mark Westcott; an East Coast tour with ex-Biohazard sound artist Jeph Jerman; Quakebasket releases from On Filmore and The Black Artists' Group; and an October trip to Sweden to play with Mats Gustafsson. Yet Barnes's only worry is how to find the time and space to do more.

"There are still lots of people I want to play with. The biggest divisor is really just geography," Barnes concludes. "I create a community of people to play with, to be continuously building outward. I try to approach music from a kind of activist standpoint. Whatever the situation is, whatever style we're playing, let's just make some really great music." □

THE FILMS OF AVANT GARDE VISIONARY AND CROWLEYITE MAGUS KENNETH ANGER HAVE ENJOYED FRUITFUL IF PROBLEMATIC RELATIONSHIPS WITH A WIDE RANGE OF MUSICIANS AND MUSICIANS, FROM THE ROLLING STONES TO JAILED POP WANNABE BOBBY BEAUSOLEIL IN A RARE LA ENCOUNTER THAT ENDS WITH A SPLASH (SEE RIGHT). RICHARD HENDERSON ATTEMPTS TO UNCOVER THE LINKS BETWEEN SOUND AND VISION IN ANGER'S MOVIES. WHILE ON PAGE 36, EDWIN POUNCEY REVISITS AN INTERVIEW HE CONDUCTED IN 1998 TO DISCUSS THE MAGIC RITUALS EMBEDDED IN ANGER'S WORK

# Sympathy for the Devil





**The coming of MTV** at the beginning of the 1980s hastened the demise of post-war independent film making. All those films once categorised as 'underground' – the poverty row fancies of Hollywood epics as re-imagined by Andy Warhol or Jack Smith or the Kuchar Brothers, the hallucinatory optics of Stan Brakhage or Jordan Belson, the meticulous meta-editing of Paul Schrader and Peter Kubelka, or Maya Deren's hallucinatory restuffing of motion and time – were stripped-naked for their most superficial characteristics by directors working within the nuptial genre of the music video. Out of the whole avant garde canon, though, possibly its most notorious director devised the template of how pop music and meticulously edited film could dovetail to galvanising effect.

That director was Kenneth Anger, a proponent of sex magick, a connoisseur of rock royalty and a custodian of Hollywood's filthy secrets. Indeed he is best known to the general public as the author of the sordid film history *Hollywood Babylon*, yet his concise body of films stretching over five decades has provided a motherlode of ideas refined to this day by rock video directors. Not that Anger himself has profited by this in the least – when visited for the purposes of this article, the director of *Scorpio Rising* and *inauguration Of The Pleasure Dome* was inhabiting a tiny guest house in a portion of Los Angeles' Echo Park neighbourhood infested with evidence of gang activity. "I've been called the godfather of MTV," notes Anger, "but I've never been invited to make [a music video]. In the early days of the network, I saw compositions taken directly from my 1964 film *Scorpio Rising* again and again. You can't even call it an homage, it's just plagiarism."

In the course of our interview, the sepulchre-guanonian Anger would display the hallmarks of several decades' worth of courting and combat with the media: tangential streams of thought offering historical insights and contradictions in equal measure; a raconteur's gift for turns of phrase and strategically dropped names; wit melting down into rancour with the speed of flax paper igniting. As though a mirror for this last tendency, a collection of scorched Roman candle wrappers occupies the floor of Anger's apartment. These, he explains, are source material gathered for a possible tribute to his first widely seen film, 1947's *Fireworks*.

Though obviously enduring a harsher form of the economic woes that have dogged him throughout his career, Anger presses forward: there is clearly much to accomplish. He is slated to leave for New York the next day to photograph the largest extant private collection of antique wind-up Mickey Mouse toys for his next film, *Mouse Heaven*, a project in the works since the 1980s. Alice Hutchinson, the author of a forthcoming monograph on Anger's films, is in town from New Zealand and requires the film maker's editorial

attention for her book proofs. Anger has attended a tribute concert honouring Country rock innovator Gram Parsons the previous night, where a friend from his past, Keith Richards, occupied the special guest slot. Parsons and Anger met in the early 70s in England, their guest residences at Richards's Redlands estate overlapping by a few days. Anger found the American "utterly charming. At the time, I was reconsidering the music for [the second version of] my film *Lucifer Rising*. Gram offered to do the soundtrack, with the interesting thought of portraying ancient Egyptian culture through Country music. I agree, but of course he killed himself [sic] before it came to pass."

Prior to discussing his signature use of music in film (an inspiration to the likes of David Lynch and Martin Scorsese, whose 1967 movie *Who's That Knocking At My Door* is as open and affectionate an homage to Anger's work as can be found in mainstream cinema), the film maker suggests a visit to nearby Echo Park Lake, one corner of which is home to an enormous grove of lotus plants planted by the evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. Anger, ever the Hollywood historian, has much to relate about the scandalous conduct of this early media manipulator and does so during a stroll past McPherson's Angelus Temple, on the way to the park. We reach Echo Park Lake with the annual *Lotus Festival* in progress, being a celebration of pan-Pacific cultures resident in the area.

The interview is compromised from the start, both by the festival's noise level and Anger's own quixotic responses. As a raggle group thuds nearby, I ask about the revised soundtrack for *Rabbit's Moon*, a blaxploited commedia dell'arte-styled short filmed in France in 1950. Originally accompanied by a terrific collection of doo-wop songs, a later, sped-up version of the film, which Anger describes as being made for the sixth birthday of the late Stan Brakhage's son, was tamished by a cluminely repeated pop song from 70s UK outfit A Raincoat. Anger offers a terse rebuttal ("it's NOT a pop song"), describing instead the music for *Puce Moment*, shot in 1949, with songs and droning guitar feedback by Jonathan Harper added decades later. Anger does allow that the shimmering parade of silent film starlet dresses shown in *Puce Moment* were originally worn by Clara Bow, Mae Murray and Barbara LaMarr, and were inherited from his grandmother, a Hollywood costume mistress in the 20s.

Anger has revised his film and their soundtracks at intervals throughout his life. Asked about this, he described all of his films as "works in progress until I die", adding, "any time I feel like changing them, I will. If it fucks up historians, I don't give a damn. To hell with them." He establishes that *Rabbit's Moon* had doo-wop songs on its track, but never truly acknowledges the shorter, interim version. In its earliest prints, the epic *inauguration Of The Pleasure Dome* was scored with music by Harry Partch. But the legendary hobo composer and instrument inventor hated the notion of his music being used with film and

asked that it be removed. Anger then dubbed in Leos Janácek's *Glagolitic Mass*, its intrinsic drama and energy recalling the pipe organ scores often heard behind silent films. *inauguration* has been presented in numerous iterations, with new layers of superimposed footage added by Anger, along with layers of iconography relating to Aleister Crowley, the occult philosopher long championed by the film maker. Yet during the later 70s, viewers of *Pleasure Dome* were greeted with Electric Light Orchestra's Eldorado album as its audio track, played more and less from start to finish. Curiously, the album often synchronised with the film in serendipitous fashion. Eventually, the Janácek Mass returned to *inauguration*, a better match for the increasingly frenzied action of the film's imagery, a surreal costume party further transfigured as though by fever dream.

Anger's body of work is often collectively presented under the banner heading of the *Majestic Lantern Cycle*. Viewed end to end, his film making techniques are the stuff of rebellious anachronism. He is, in essence, a silent film director, eschewing the use of synchronised sound. Often as not, his films use recorded music with calm, almost random placement, not unlike a 1930s director dropping the needle on records as a score. Though known for his revolutionary editing of pop music alongside multi-layered footage, the latter often representing transgressive subject matter (bikinis sporting Nazi iconography, graphic depiction of gay sex and violence), the visual and ideological electricity for which Anger is famous recedes for the most part from *Scorpio Rising*, and its continuous track of AM radio hits ("Party Lights", "Wipeout", "He's A Rebel", the last beneath a re-enactment of the life of Christ) dividing the segments of the 29 minute film. "That music was played on the radio continuously in the summer of 63, prior to the Kennedy assassination," says Anger. "I chose the music both because those songs reflected the mood of that summer and because the lyrics offered ironic commentary or no images. I was the first to use [Bobby Vinton's] 'Blue Velvet', David Lynch copied me. My use was ironic. Where the lyrics say 'she wore blue velvet', I have a very vain motorcycle guy dressing in denim and a leather jacket that reflects blue lights, my comment on his effeminate vanity."

Moving forward to his four year stay in late 60s San Francisco, Anger reiterates the oft told tale of stolen footage which defeated his first attempt to film *Lucifer Rising*, blaming his starring actor, guitarist and composer Bobby Beausoleil, for the theft. According to Anger, his next film, the 11 minute *Invocation Of My Demon Brother* (1968), was completed with the only footage remaining. Mick Jagger scored it with a continuous, slowly mutating pulse from his newly acquired modular Moog synthesizer. Its filters shifted subtly to allow greater treble energy through during moments of visual tension, such as the scenes featuring American troops leaping from a helicopter, the cremation of a dead cat, and Anger himself racing

through a costumed ritual.

After he was later incarcerated in California's Tracy Prison in conjunction with the Manson killings in Los Angeles, Bobby Beausoleil reached a rapprochement with Anger. The original Lucifer provided a score, recorded in prison during the late 70s with a Nagra tape recorder provided by the film maker, for the next version of *Lucifer Rising*, shot in England and Egypt and completed for release in 1990. Beausoleil's music might best be described as similar to mid-70s German space rock such as Ash Ra Tempel or the playing of Beausoleil's late 60s Bay Area contemporary, Quicksilver Messenger Service guitarist John Cipollina. Beausoleil's music replaced an initial score for tambour, melotron and tape-reversed guitar recorded by Jimmy Page in the early 70s for a shorter version of *Lucifer Rising*. But soon enough Page became the next target of Anger's wrath and was dismissed from the project. It is Beausoleil's soundtrack that has recently been issued as a double CD by Arcium Entertainment. Included on a second disc are the sole recordings of Beausoleil's original group, The Magick Powerhouse Of Oz, a short-lived collective originally convened in San Francisco to perform live in tandem with Anger's film.

When the new soundtrack is mentioned, Anger claims no knowledge of either the CD or Arcium. His reply piqued, he decries the release as "a rip-off". Yet after our conversation, I discover notes by Anger praising the jailed musician in the *Lucifer Rising* CD's elaborate packaging. The liner notes also contain Beausoleil's rebuttal to Anger's accusations, the veracity of the latter's burglary story having been previously questioned in Bill Landis's unauthorised 1995 biography, *Anger*.

The interview diminishes to something like a conclusion, the reggae music skanking ever louder in the distance. Anger has revealed that his favourite American film is William A Wellman's 1939 *Beau Geste* ("Gary Cooper at his most beautiful"), but has said comparatively little about music. He poses by the edge of the park's lake, as he decries a backdrop of the dense, alien lotus stalks for his photograph.

Kneeling with his arms spread in cruciform posture, his shirt opened to reveal a prominent Lucifer tattoo etching across his chest, he directs with sternorian voice the framing of his own image. Then, in a moment of unspeakable weirdness, Anger very slowly loses his balance by degrees and topples backwards into Echo Park Lake. It should be noted that comedy duo Laurel and Hardy fell into the same lake the better part of a century before, also while being filmed. But then, they meant to. Back in the present, Kenneth Anger disappears completely beneath the Sylgan waters. Tsinfully, his arm is quickly located and with assistance he breaks the surface seconds later. After being pulled from the mire of the lotus thicket, soaked, giddy and back on his knees, Anger gamely insists on resuming the photo session. He grew up in Hollywood, after all. The show must go on. □



Baba from *Invocation Of My Demon Brother* (1969/2004) including Bobby Beausoleil as Lucifer (bottom)



More stills from *Invention Of My Own Brother* (1968/2004) including Kenneth Anger as the Magus (top right) and Marianne Faithful (bottom right)



## INDUSTRIAL LIGHT AND MAGICK. BY EDWIN POUNCEY

In 1955 Kenneth Anger travelled to Cefalù in Sicily on a personal pilgrimage to make a documentary about magician Crowley's notorious Abbey of Thlema. This was the one-storey house which the self-styled Great Beast 666 had rented in 1920 as a base for adepts who wished to study his own system of Thlemaic magick – the main principle of which was that each man and woman should be allowed to discover their own "True Will". Crowley's Abbey survived for three years before Benito Mussolini's fascist regime kicked him and his followers out of the country. But on the interior plaster walls and wooden shutters they left behind a series of magically inspired murals, together with a power that Anger sensed as soon as he entered the building, even though it had been whitewashed over. The film maker spent that summer painstakingly restoring the Abbey to its former glory.

"I felt like I was being watched in the room, and that was because of the paintings that were underneath the whitewash had eyes that were beginning to peek through," he laughed, recounting the experience when I met and interviewed him at London's October Gallery in 1996. "Crowley's bedroom walls were entirely painted with magical figures, and he called it his Room of Nightmares. A new initiate to his order would take mescaline or something similar, and spend the night in there. The figures would then come alive."

"There is a line of poetry running around his bed from a rather rude poem called 'Leah Sublime,'" he continued, explaining, "Leah [Hirsg] being his main mistress at the time, the Scarlet Woman. This was all around his bed, together with a row of what he called Dark Faced Demons peeking out and watching what was going on in the bed. These weird half-animal, half-human faces that looked like mutants from the film *Alien* or *Lost Souls*."

The startling demonic images Anger recovered from the abbey walls also bore a remarkable resemblance to many of the gods, magicians and elemental creatures that appeared in his fifth film, *Inauguration Of The Pleasure Dome*, shot the previous year – a hallucinatory costume epic in which Anger successfully transferred his devotion and understanding of Crowley's rituals to the silver screen.

"The film is derived from one of Crowley's dramatic rituals where people in the cult assume the identity of a god or a goddess," announced Anger, in an annotated filmography. "In other words, it's the equivalent of a masquerade party – they plan this for a whole year and on All Sabbath's Eve they come as the gods and goddesses that they have identified with, and the whole thing is like an improvised happening."

The gods and goddesses depicted in Anger's *Pleasure Dome* included the magician Lord Shiva, the Scarlet Woman, Kai, Isis, Lilit, Gangmede, Cesare the Sonambulist (from Robert Waine's *The Cabinet Of Dr Caligari*), Asante and Pan. Anger

himself plays the part of Hecate in a sequence that gradually escalates into a psychedelic orgy of light and drug induced imagery – "a magick masquerade at which Pan is the prize" he explained. The dreamlike atmosphere is further fuelled by the superimposition of various images from other films – together with various Crowley visual references – all of which are spliced together to produce a genuine feeling of occult disillusionment. As well as Crowley, *Inauguration Of The Pleasure Dome* also pays homage to the great silent movies like Danton's *Inferno*, DW Griffith's *Messiah* and Eisenstein's *Ivan The Terrible*, while the young film maker grew up watching in Hollywood.

In later years, Anger sincerely considered movies to be evil, and believed that he was working evil in an evil empire. "I think evil is something which is attractive and compelling," he told writer Rebekah Wood in *The Pleasure Dome – The Films Of Kenneth Anger* (BFM 1989), "a seduction into the unreal which is glorious and ultimately unsatisfactory. I still love movies."

After completing his next two films, *Scorpio Rising* and *Kustom Kar Kommandos* (1965), Anger turned his hand to his magnum opus *Lucifer Rising*, a film that was intended as a pagan celebration and invocation of the forces that govern the natural world; a cinematic hymn to Lucifer, whom Anger regarded as the god of light and colour, rather than an embodiment of evil.

"I'm an artist working in light, and that's my whole interest," Anger states in Robert A. Haller's monograph for the Filmmakers Filming series, "*Lucifer is the Light God, not the devil – that's a Christian slander*. The devil is always other people's gods. Lucifer has appeared in other films of mine; I haven't labelled him as such, but there's usually a figure or a moment in those films which is my 'Lucifer' moment."

Anger's initial attempt at creating *Lucifer Rising* in 1966 was curtailed when his first lead actor suddenly died. The situation worsened when most of the footage he had shot in San Francisco went missing, together with his new Lucifer character, musician Bobby Beausoleil, and Anger accused him of stealing it. The project was put on hold, and what remained of the footage became the shorter *Invocation Of My Demon Brother (Arrangement In Black And Gold)* (1969). With a cast that included Church Of Satan founder Anton Szandor LaVey as Satan, Bobby Beausoleil as Lucifer and Anger as Magus, *Invocation* is a more focused interpretation of ceremonial magick, "a conjuration of pagan forces [which] comes off the screen in a surge of spiritual and mystical power", as Anger clarified in his programme note to the film. When asked by Rebekah Wood about the significance of the Demon Brother motif in the film's title, he cryptically explained that it was either your better self or your worse self, or the part of you that's needed to become complete. Once again his use of superimposed footage creates a sense of supernatural awe. Magical symbols and talismans are projected onto actors, spliced and repeated footage of

soldiers leaping out of helicopters in Vietnam acts as a backdrop of violence and chaos, while shots of The Rolling Stones performing in London's Hyde Park symbolically link Anger's invocation with the Aquarian Age.

Towards the end of the film Anger is seen holding a child. Beausoleil's eyes are superimposed on its face, then on the faces of Keith Richards and Anita Pallenberg to form a kind of rock 'n' roll pentagram, in a final puff of smoke a voodoo doll appears holding a sign that reads, "ZAP YOU'RE PREGNANT – THAT'S WITCHCRAFT".

Anger had expressed an interest in making a version of *Lucifer Rising* with The Stones, where Anger would be cast as Lucifer and Richards as his demonic henchman Beelzebub, Lord of the Flies. Anger was also convinced that Pallenberg was a witch because of her interest in the occult. This idea was rejected, though, when Anger backed away from being identified with Lucifer, a role he would ironically later assume at the disastrous Altamont Festival, where four people died.

When it was shown in August 1969, the underground film circuit received *Invocation* with enthusiasm, and Anger's film making reputation was re-established. More importantly, the film showed how he had finally succeeded in transferring Thlemaic theory to film, here his association with Crowley, his leading man Bobby Beausoleil and the Rolling Stones entourage was brought together in a mesmerising splash of magical light and colour, before burning out in a blaze of violent and murderous late 60s hedonism.

Anger's second version of *Lucifer Rising* (1970-80) – with Marianne Faithfull as Lilit the cabalistic goddess of destruction, Donald Cammell (co-director, with Roig, of *Performance*) as Diana and Leslie Huggins as Lucifer – was filmed in Lucifer, Kamml, Gaza, Germany's Extremsteine, Avebury and London. It opens with a scene of volcanoes erupting and ends with a flying saucer passing over the Temple of Lucifer. Anger once again casts himself as a Magus, this time wearing a conical wizard's hat which makes him resemble Mickey Mouse's Sorcerer's Apprentice in Walt Disney's *Fantasia*. Despite this somewhat comical connection, *Lucifer Rising* is a deeply religious film that connects mankind with the ancient gods and seriously attempts to summon up Lucifer, Bringer of Light.

In his films, Anger treats the camera as his magical weapon and considers his movies to be spells. The works he shot and assembled during this intensely creative period still exude a powerful mysticism. Taken together as the *Magick Lantern Cycle*, they finally convince the viewer that Anger is not only a great film maker but, like Crowley at the height of his powers, also a great magician. □

Kenneth Anger, a monograph by Alice L. Hutchison, is published this month by Black Dog. An exhibition of stills from *Invocation Of My Demon Brother* opens at London's Modern Art Inc ([www.modernartinc.com](http://www.modernartinc.com)) on 2 Sept and runs until 10 October

# Songs From A PARALLEL unIVERSE

IN THE FREE JAZZ/PUNK SPECTACLES OF ANARCHIC FRENCH TRUMPETER, BICYCLE-USER, AUTHOR AND SCENE MAKER TURNED SCENE BREAKER AND BERTRALD ANTONIN ARTAUD-SHE-SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE POPE, NURSE WITH WOUND, NO WAVE'S JAMES CHANCE AND ROCK 'N' ROLL CASUALTY VINTAGE TAILOR. WORDS: DAN WARBURTON. ILLUSTRATION: JONIE





"I've always been a cryptic artist," smiles Jac Berrocal, deftly inserting another Gauloise into a long, black cigarette holder and refreshing his wheezy coils. "The first time I recorded was in the crypt of a Romanian church, next to the spot where two saints were beatified in 73 AD." The church in question was St. Savaien et Petar, in the quiet Burgundian city of Sens, where Berrocal, Dominique Coster and Roger Ferlet arrived in October 1973 with an armful of instruments including Tibetan conch shells, horns from Pakistan, balloons and small explosives. "We started with a basic plan, but this soon fell by the wayside. We just fell in love with the sound of the church, that thousand year old reverberation."

Released in 1973 in a limited edition on the mythic Future label, home to legendary avant outfitts like Red Noise, Mahogany Brain and Fille Qui Mousse, Musique Musique, with its rhythmic combination of high and low art, circus farfane and shamanistic incantation, launched the career of one of contemporary music's most charismatic and exciting performers. It's fitting that it was recorded in a crypt, as Berrocal remains an underground figure par excellence, his music being a perfect example of categories straining, cracking and sometimes breaking under their burden.

"It wasn't jazz, it wasn't rock, and it had nothing to do with contemporary music either. It was a kind of some postard," recalls Berrocal. The same could be said for much of his work with artists as diverse as rock 'n' roll fallen angel Vince Taylor, No Wave luminary Jim Chance and Cancer With Wound's Steven Stapleton. Further, Berrocal is more than "just a trumpeter". Combining Artzaolian theater with the excesses of glam and punk, his wild performances have been soaring audience out of their wits ever since French Improvised Music burst into life in the late 1970s with albums such as *Un Drame Musical Instantané*'s debut *Trop D'Adhésifure Aut*, Jean-François Paurois and Gaby Bielen's *No Man's Land* and Berrocal's own *Paratâles*. Over theatricality was one of the distinctive features of a scene that had little in common with improvised music in Britain, Germany and Holland, owing more to post-1968 Situationist street theater than it did to high octane free jazz. Berrocal's first performances took place at various happenings, where he soon found that dedicated left wing student activists had pretty limited ideas of what music should be. "I managed to pass them off after about two minutes," he smiles. "What we did was unplayable in a conventional concert. It needed a specific mise-en-scène."

Berrocal's love of "le spectacle" was instilled in him at an early age when he was sent to Catholic boarding school. "I was exposed to all those dark churches and bleeding statues," he recalls. "There's a lot of pain in Christianity, but there's also that sumptuous music. It's part of our culture – you don't have to believe in God to love it." He sang in the school choir at the funeral of the Archbishop of Sens. "Being in front of thousands of people, with all the costumes, incense and candles was better than the Olympia, better than Carnegie Hall!"

If religion left its mark on Berrocal, who was born in Charente Maritime in 1948 and brought up in Sens, so did images of war. Haunted by a photograph of his comrade-playing grandfather – killed in action on 21 December 1914 – Berrocal took up the trumpet during his own military service, taking lessons with two fellow squaddies. On leaving the army he moved to Paris, where he devoured music in all its forms. "Moving from Leo Ferre to Ombrone's 'Lonely Woman' wasn't a problem," he says. There he struck up friendships with painter and writer Michel Potage and accordionist Claude Perle. "It was a bit like what happened in England later with punk," he adds. "We wanted to play,

but none of us really knew how to."

Intermittent de Spectacle (Entertainment Contract Worker) status, an essential safety net for artists in France that allows them full access to benefit and social security coverage, already existed, but as many concerts were organised informally on a shoestring budget, they weren't officially declared. "Only well known musicians could make a living from it," Berrocal explains. "The rest of us did all kinds of jobs. We didn't have subsidised venues, but we found places to play, like the Salle Olmsted and the Théâtre Mouffetard. With 150 people it would be full."

Berrocal did secure funding for the Sens Music Meeting, an ambitious festival he staged in his home town in 1978, 1980 and 1983. Its list of featured artists reads like a roll-call of European free music's leading lights. "We put a lot of energy into it, and a lot of our own money too," he sighs. "If the project was short of a few centimes, you put them in yourself, even if you didn't have them." One such venture was the *o'vantage* label Berrocal set up in 1976 with Potage and Roger Ferlet. Even though it only released five albums – Berrocal's own *Paratâles* and Catalogue among them – Berrocal accumulated an extensive archive of unreleased recordings, some of which surfaced on the Alga Marghen release of *Paratâles* in 2001, including Potage's remarkable "Occupé". "Michel made a fantastic cover for it in green moulded plastic with an Occupé sign, like the ones you find on train toilets. It would have cost a fortune to release, but we were ready to, until Michel decided against it. I'm happy he let me reissue it."

Through the album credits a studio called SYSSA, it was recorded in various locations: "Bric-à-Brac (À Ruisseau)" in a house in Montrhâre where "pianist" Richard Marachin insisted on playing a Bechstein; "Rock 'N' Roll Station" in a Le Corbusier house owned by Bernard Vitton's parents; and the extraordinary "Postcard" on a pig farm in Jouany, Burgundy. On the latter, the combination of the banal nonsequiturs of the text, which Berrocal and Potage came across on a postcard found in a rubbish bin, the eerie wall of Berrocal's trombone and Potage's bowed guitar with the grinding machinery and squealing pigs, is utterly wild. We had to do it fast because when we started playing the pigs got quite agitated," laughs Berrocal.

Paratâles' most famous track, and Berrocal's most celebrated piece, is the mythic "Rock 'N' Roll Station". Featuring the voice of his flesh performer Vince Taylor, a simple bassline from Pierre Bastien, and Berrocal himself on an upturned bicycle, it's a deceptively simple song with a gently permuted and slightly surreal lyric: "I'm in a rock 'n' roll station/And I'm waiting for Michael/But he's not here." Though Berrocal is obviously fond of the song, having recorded it on several occasions – notably with Bastien, Jaki Liebezeit and Pascal Commeaille on the latter's *The Oblique Sessions* (1997) and on 1999's *Flesh* – he's quite matter-of-fact about its origins and the chance meetings that led to its creation.

"I wrote the text at work, and Michel's girlfriend translated it into English," Berrocal recalls. "It was originally for me to perform, though I had fantasised about Lou Reed. As it happened I met Vince [Taylor] in a friend's antiques shop, and as soon as I heard him speak I knew that was the voice I wanted. Maybe I'd been thinking of Vince without realising it, in a way. Not that it's specifically about a rock 'n' roll singer on the way down, or the Stations of the Cross, if you like, but a kind of nostalgic thing because people had forgotten what rock 'n' roll was. Rock 'n' roll as such didn't exist anymore. Who was there, apart from Vince? I read the text, and he liked it. We changed one or two words, inserted the reference to his 1959 hit record "Brand

New Cadillac", and that was it."

If the meeting with Taylor was a fortuitous accident, so was the bicycle. "Originally it was supposed to be for bass, cello, trumpet and Vince," smiles Berrocal, "but [cellist] Philippe Pochon overslept and missed the session. There was this bike hanging around the house, so I said to [engineer] Daniel Deshayes, 'Can we try something with this?' I remember Vince saying, 'This bren, c'est comme une batonniere' [Great, it's just like a drum kit.]. Daniel had a Revox [tape recorder] and four mics. One for the voice, two for the bike and one for the bass. We did two takes. No overdubs. It went down like that."

Berrocal's admiration for Taylor remains obsessionnal. Taylor – real name Maurice Brian Holden – was born in London in 1939 but grew up in New Jersey where the family moved in 1946. He returned to England and scored a huge hit with "Brand New Cadillac", but realising that British punters in 1961 were more enamoured with Cliff Richard, he headed for France where, decked out in skin-tight black leather, his outrageous antics were enthusiastically promoted by the Olympia's Bruno Cousturaud and record mogul Eddie Barclay. By the mid-1960s Taylor's concerts frequently degenerated into brawls as dance-crazed French teenagers tore venues apart, and Taylor, drinking heavily and experimenting with any drug he could find, became increasingly erratic onstage, launching into harrowing spectacles of messianic preaching. Legend has it he was the original model for David Bowie's character Ziggy Stardust, and Berrocal still believes it. "I'm in a rock 'n' roll station/And I'm waiting for Ziggy Stardust," he walls on his version of his magnum opus on *Flesh*.

"I'm sure one day rock 'n' roll will come back," declares Berrocal. "What Vince did was as timeless as Mozart's *Requiem* or Monk's *Bessie Smith*. Who gives a fuck when it was recorded? It works. Take an album like [Scott Walker's] *Tilt*, that mixture of the murky, the squelch and that voice, so austere. Timeless."

Berrocal's own live appearances in the 1970s and 1980s are the stuff of legend. "There was a spontaneity to it that was almost suicidal, terrifying. People were afraid I would kill myself," he smiles. In 1976 he and Potage clumped a ton of sand in the Musée d'Art Moderne for an event entitled Escalade Au Sablé à L'Ancrene Et À La Nodeme. At Transmissions in Rennes in 1978, Perle built a wall out of plaster, while Potage, sporting make-up and a feather boa, and Berrocal, dressed Taylor-style in black leather, strutted round to the strains of "Lie Marlene" – another Berrocal fetish song. In Austin in 1987 with Catalogue, he antagonised the crowd by simulating fellatio on guitarist Jean-François Paurois. "The jazz snobs hated us but Cecil Taylor thought we were great!" Berrocal laughs. "Whenever Bero did something there was always a crowd," recalls Jacques Ogier, owner of the Pottstock label and formerly saxophonist with Asociet, a trio with Étienne Brunet and Marc Dufour whose first album appeared on *o'vantage*. "In rehearsal he wrote ideas out on small scraps of paper and literally strung them together. The flagge, he called it. Then, of course, in concert he did something completely different!"

Guy Girard filmed Berrocal on numerous occasions during the 1980s and 1990s, and his harrasing 2002 documentary *Les Chants De Bataille*, along with other archive footage, will be released as a DVD later this year. Also due for reissue on Alga Marghen is the 1979 Catalogue, which, as Berrocal points out, features not the group of the same name but instead numerous Berrocal associates including Potage, Perle, Ferlet and recording engineer Daniel Deshayes. It's every bit as wild as *Paratâles*. Not content with manhandling a toy piano on "Tango" (which features mind-blowing



according from Parie), abusing an arsenal of instruments including saw blades, pistols, shower attachments and even gingerbread, Berrocal pushes his own voice way over the edge on "Incontrolo della Boo" and "Farts Divers", moving from a 60-plus smoker's cough to a tempestuous sequence of gurgles and vomits. The grungy free rock of "No More Dirty Sla Blige" joins the Portmarnock Seafarers-like spoof Daeveland of "Rideau", the distressing punk of "Signe Particular" and all manner of field recordings and cut-ups in Berrocal's then ornate release to date.

said. "We'll see in the studio."

In June 1980, Berrocal travelled to London with his Tibetan oboe and pocket trumpet and recorded with Stapleton, Hemant Pathak and John Fothergill on NWW's second album, *To The Quiet Man From A Tiny Git*. "It was high speed," says Berrocal. "They had very little studio time but a hell of a lot of drugs." Stapleton remembers it differently, saying Berrocal had "a hell of a lot of wine – and remarkably shiny shoes".

The combination of Stapleton's surreal cut-ups of radio broadcasts and obscure recordings with the icy blast of Berrocal's oboe and conch shell sounds as fresh and strange as if they had been recorded last week. While in London he also recorded the mournful synthesiser track "Conseil Des Minstres", which opens *An Afflicted Man's Music Box*, a compilation also featuring contributions from Foothes, Arman, Roger Dayle and AMM. Berrocal has fond memories of playing with AMM's Eddie Prevost and the Portuguese duo Telectu in 1998. "Eddie was so patient, You see," he says. "I'm terrible at performing alone. I have to give a solo concert soon and I don't know how I'm going to do it."

Despite such candid admissions, Berrocal lies in black leather and sunglasses and tutted by whatever beverage he can lay his hands on, is an awesome performer, who remains eternally drawn to the stage, while early sparring partners such as Potage, Poiré, Ferlet and Stapleton have long since retired from it. When Berrocal organised the third and final Sens Musique Meeting in 1983, he invited Nurse With Wound to perform. Though Stapleton refused, the line-up was nevertheless impressive, including Arthur Braxton, Fred Van Hove, Andre Centazzo, Jon Hassell, The Au Pair, Meshes Mengelberg & Han Bennink and Tuxedomoon, not to mention d'Avantage regulars Paurous, Bausten and Aekisti.

Berrocal himself performed with Feste Baisten and two Palestinian musicians, percussionist Mahmoud Jaffari and violinist Tala Charles. The latter also appears on 1985's Hotel Hotel, a typical Berrocal journey from the medieval fantasm of "Sonnene A Louis Le XI" to the breathy orgasm of "Japan's Garden", via the ebullient free jazz of "Atlantic" and "East River", on which Berrocal is joined by Alceu Danuk Lazro. Lazro paid further homage to Ayler and Coleman (and Charles Tyler) in 1993, with the quartet Outlaws In Jazz, featuring Berrocal, bassist Didier Levallée and drummer Denis Charles. On their one and only album – Charles's death in 1998 ended the group – Lazro is an awesome form throughout, and Berrocal plays Donald Ayler and Cherry – to his Albert. Though Berrocal recall's well the arrival of American free jazzmen in 1969, and the explosion of Free Music recorded that year for BYG Actuel, he admits he "wasn't tempted to play like that at the time. It was into Tibetan music, and that was even crazier".

Berrocal's live trumpet, extended and transformed by an arsenal of electronic devices, is beautifully documented on 1991's *In Situ* album *Le Nut Est Au Courant*, on which he leads a quartet consisting of two basses – Hubertus Baermann and Francis Mommende – and drummer Jacques Tholot. "In 1988 I heard on the radio that Chet Baker had died," Berrocal says. "I knew Jacques had played with Chet, and so I called him on the phone in the middle of the night, saying we had to do something." From child prodigy drummer in the 1960s, Tholot had evolved into a brilliant but unpredictable multi-instrumentalist – original copies of his 1970s albums on Futura and Penn now fetch astronomical prices. The interplay between his drums and Berrocal's trumpet is exemplary.

By the time the *Le Nut* quartet took to the road, Catalogue had scaled down their activities. "Groups

were out after a while, like friendships and marriage," Berrocal sighs. "I think it's good we're still great friends. The problem with Catalogue was that we never had a label to support us, like an art dealer calls up a painter and says, 'Are you working? I've got plans for an exhibition...' If there's nobody behind you, no concert in view, no recording in the pipeline, and nobody interested, you might as well stop. Actually, I think from time to time an artist should stop working... not definitely, but to be able to start up later with something strong. Anyone can turn out shit. As human beings we're fantastically good at it – we do it every day. Sometimes I walk round and round my room, not wanting to do anything. It's like fasting. There's no great urgency to create. But it's true that if other people know your work and call you up, it helps."

One such person was Japanese musician Akio Onida, whose intensely personal montages of cassette recordings recall Berrocal's explorations on Catalogue. Onida and Berrocal performed an extraordinary set at the Sénior des Halles in January this year, where Berrocal's reading of Ariadna took the audience by surprise. "I suggested reading that text because we didn't have much time to rehearse," he smiles, "and I need a lot of rehearsal. I love rehearsing. Rehearsals are often much better than concerts."

More of Berrocal's poetry in performance has just been released by Alga Marghen. Phénix includes recordings he made with Jacques Doyen in 1985 featuring texts by Artaud, André Breton and a "sonata prayer" by Berrocal himself. Doyen's extraordinary reading of Alien Ginsberg can also be heard on "Scène", released on 1993's *Fatal Encounters* (Les Desques Du Soleil Et De L'Aurore), a wide-ranging compilation of Berrocal's work, including 13 previously unreleased tracks dating back to 1971.

In 1986 Berrocal flew to America to record with James Chance, bassist Ron Anderson and Jason Willett of the jazz label Megaphone. "We throw ideas at each other," he remembers, "a Don Cherry piece, something by Ornette, something by Giuseppe Logari, and he mentioned material by Billie Holiday and Iggy Pop... Of the 45 minutes of music recorded only one '7' single appeared, followed later by "I Wanna Be Your Dog" on the Alga Marghen picture disc Flash, a brief but illuminating snapshot of Berrocal's enduring affection for music in all its forms, from the sweaty Techno montage of "London 1999" to the lo-fi cover of "Rock 'N' Roll Station", which sounds as raw as early Joy Division.

"I love Joy Division," says Berrocal. "They were an amazing group of performers who created something unique, very rare. I loved that astonishing coldness with hot instrumentation. Like the first PIL record. The Sex Pistols were not but PIL was cold. Perfect for the times. We didn't have the same kind of trauma in France that you had under Thatcher. Under dictators you often get an explosion of great art, whereas if you subsidise everything and hand money out left, right and centre, you end up with a lot of shit. These days you can say anything you like about the Queen or the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Pope and it doesn't shock anyone anymore. I'm not religious at all, but when people have a go only at Christianity that passes me off. They wouldn't dare attack on Islam or a rabbi because they're too afraid."

After paying with performers as diverse as Vince Taylor, Steven Stapleton, big mallets star-turned-Gaulter model Yvette Horner and Akio Onida, I wonder if there's anyone else out there Berrocal would like to work with. "Oh yes," he smiles, finishing his drink with relish. "Marlyn Manson!" Catalogue is released this month on Alga Marghen. Thanks to Steven Stapleton and Jacques Oger for their help with this feature.







# the hobby gook

SOMETIMES EVEN THE PIONEER OF NEW MUSIC'S FREEST STATES HAS TO STAND NAKED. NOW RESIDENT IN BARCELONA, IMPROV'S WITIEST AND MOST ACERBIC THINKER DEREK BAILEY BARES HIS SOUL ABOUT HIS LIFELONG PURSUIT OF NON-IDIOMATIC MUSICS AND HIS EVER-EVOLVING GUITAR PLAYING STRATEGIES.  
WORDS: DAVID KEENAN PHOTOS: JAKE WALTERS

Derek Bailey at home in Barcelona

**"PLAYING, THAT'S WHAT IT IS ABOUT.  
PLAYING IS LIKE LIVING BUT BETTER"**

"I'm just what Spain needs," quips Derek Bailey with a shrug that's pure stand-up, "another fucking guitarist." For the past year Bailey has been living in Barcelona, improvising with a group of local musicians, trading his plectrum for a fingerpicking style that's given his playing an arched, flamenco edge (and his thumb a constellation of blisters) and drinking like a Club Med pro. "Wine, Beer, Gin, Whiskey," he gmins. "It's one of the drawbacks of this town, I said to my landlord, 'The problem here is alcohol.' And he said, 'What do you mean, you can't find any?' I can find plenty! It's avoiding it that's the problem. There is no situation in this town where they don't have alcohol. When we first moved here it was ridiculous. We were at it every night but we've cooled it a bit. It's that British thing, we get over here and it's like being let off the leash. But I do enjoy it. I mean, Peter Brötzmann's stopped so someone has to start."

Derek Bailey in Barcelona sounds faintly ridiculous, like Sun Ra in Sheffield. There's something about Bailey's sardonic urbanity, the taut, angular aggression of his guitar playing and his deadpan flat cap wit – Charlie Christian meets Eric Morecambe – that is particularly born of Hackney, where he has based himself since the late 1960s. But even though he hasn't given up his East London house – his partner Karen Brockman still runs the Incus label from that address – he has no place to return. "Never. Not if I can fucking help it. Never. I'm not going back. No way. No, I would avoid it. The difference between here and Clapton Pond, Murder Mile as it's known, is quite noticeable.

We're sitting at a table in a beautiful little rented apartment on the first floor of a long arcing terrace, lost somewhere in the middle of Barcelona's Born Gotic, a claustrophobic maze of interconnecting squares linked by tiny winding streets just off the city's main drag, La Rambla.

"People love to dance in this city," Bailey abruptly announces. "I've never seen so much public dancing, people dancing around to buskers, everything, I was in this supermarket, right? And there was nothing going on. And then this music came on, this dance music, this... stuff, I walked around this stall and I more or less bumped into this young lady, I took a little bow and spread my arms and I said, 'Shall we dance?' And she smiled – those Spanish eyes, you know – and I could tell she was saying to herself, I don't mind, but not with you, you old bugger."

Barcelona has clearly gone to his head. At 74 years old, and the subject of a new 450-page biography by Ben Watson, Bailey is re-energised, full of ideas for new projects and collaborations, full of life, as if by just stepping off the map the weight of being the central cog in the UK's free improvisation scene has dissolved like so much candyfloss. "I like it here because I can get lost, just step out of my door and lose myself in the streets," he explains. "But there were strong musical reasons to get out of London. For the kind of music I'm involved in, London is very organised. There are people like, what do you call that... the LMC, things like that. It's all settled and established and that does not suit me at all. I got sick of all that. I did 17 years of Company Week and then suddenly I could see it all in front of me, all mapped out, these anniversary things coming up, you know, 20

years of Company! 25 years of Company! All that bullshit. And I thought, I'm not going to go through with that. So coming here is like starting from scratch."

In an interview in a local magazine soon after he arrived, Bailey announced that he was willing to play with anyone who was interested. After that, the deluge. "There are a lot of really great players in this town," he claims. "A lot of very good guitar players, good bassists, all very young. It's all so unorganised here too. The musicians have tried to set up some kind of organisation but it just doesn't work, which is great." As well as a regular monthly gig at a photographer's studio, Bailey has given his front room over to regular sessions with oil comes, like bassist Christopher Wilson (a transplanted American who has just cut a duet CD with Bailey), guitarist Ferran Fages, trumpeter Ruth Barberán, pianist Agustí Fernández and cellist Dorothy Schmitz.

"If they can play their instrument I'll play with them," Bailey says. "I can't give two fucks whether they're improvisors or not, in fact some of the most interesting people aren't improvisors. As long as they can play the instrument. Like I played once with this German woman who plays cello, she just fixes things on the cello and grinds away for an hour. I'm not interested in that. I like them to play in a conventional way if you like – notes, technique, that shit, that's what attracts me – but a lot of these guys here are very into what I call 'avant garde'. Like this bassist I play with, very good, classical, he'll just go around the room with his bass like a hoover, just grinding it on the floor. I mean it makes an amazing noise, but they're that way inclined, if you know what I mean. The guitar players tend to go for unusual tunings, they have some nice effects but anyway, it's all right, I quite like it."

Despite his presence in everything from The Penguin Guide To Jazz On CD through to festival bills alongside Earl Hines and Benny Carter, Derek Bailey is awfully not a jazz guitarist. Certainly not a hot jazz guitarist. "Free jazz?" he bursts. "Listen, I have only ever met three musicians who can play free jazz – Milford Graves, William Parker and Peter Brötzmann. When you play with those guys you know you're playing free jazz, it's free and it's jazz. Don't ask me to explain it. I don't know how. All I know is it just fucking feels like free jazz. Now I think the whole European thing, that's not jazz. That's something else altogether." But Bailey's background certainly feels like jazz. From 1955 until 1968 his main source of income was as an itinerant commercial guitarist, chasing danceband work from Glasgow to Jersey, and it was there that he first became keyed in to the necessity for a working musician to have a facility for speed-of-thought improvisation.

"Most jazz critics don't have a clue what it was like back then, but the fact is you couldn't make a living without being able to improvise," he insists. "If you worked in a dancehall in a quartet, you had no [sheet] music. I worked for 15 months with a quartet, six nights, six afternoons and we had nine arrangements. So the rest of the time you're playing on your ear. But as regards the free improvisation thing, I put it down to meeting Tony Oxley and Gavin Bryars. They were going somewhere and I thought, I'll fucking go with them. I wasn't doing much anyway,

and I thought they're much younger than me, I'll go with them."

Bailey's guitar playing draws on a host of modern tongues, lifting language from Anton Webern and Cecil Taylor, speed and agility from bebop, and form and focus from out of the era, all of which he grounds in the physical aspects of the instrument. He speaks in dead staccato, lightning clusters and swooping open strings, all of which highlight the instrument's construction, as well as the nuts and bolts of real-time creation. Yet the evocative force of his invention he very rarely falls back on extended technique – the bulk of Bailey's musical strategies are totally inside. "I'm a guitar player," he reiterates. "I might play in a way which nobody else plays but I play guitar, I wouldn't do what I do on any other instrument. It's very specific, I like the construction of it and the basic tuning, like fourths and a major third. That plays a significant part in what I play, harmonics, open strings, fourths. I always use a standard tuning. Always. I wouldn't know what to do with the others. In fact I think standard tuning is a piece of genius. Whoever thought of it? Over the years nobody has found a better tuning in any music. Rock, flamenco, classical jazz, all of them mainly come back to the standard tuning and I think of it as somehow appropriate to the guitar." He breaks into a grin. "You know, my son will say to me, 'I've been listening to you for 20 odd years and I still don't know what the fuck you're doing'. He's a chemist, so I say to him, 'Well, I don't know what the fuck you're doing either'."

For Bailey, not knowing what the fuck you're doing is an indication that you're doing it right. His playing is all exploratory process, one movement of the hands and then the next, every gesture simultaneously a separate sound event, an isolated real-time response and an invisible part of a conceptual whole.

"For me the real interest is kind of starting from nothing," he explains. "You have no guide, you don't start from an idiom, like jazz or rock, you start from nothing and see what happens. When I first started playing with Tony Oxley and Gavin Bryars as Joseph Holbrooke in the mid-60s we sort of stumbled across this idea, at a certain point we were suddenly playing free. I don't know how that happened. We were three different people – Gavin was a composer, Tony was a jazz drummer – and the most successful way we could play together was to play free. For a while we played modally, then we played free in a modal context, then we just dumped the stuff. There was no point at which somebody said let's try and play free. But there was a lot of pleasure to move that way, particularly from Gavin. He wouldn't play time, he'd play long quiet notes, while I'd be plinking and plonking and Tony would be hitting the fucking wall. It came out of that."

Although archival recordings of the Joseph Holbrooke trio are virtually non-existent, incus have made available a remarkable CD-ROM that includes a 1965 rehearsal extract featuring the group tearing through John Coltrane's "Miles's Modo", literally unravelling the very fibre of the music. You can hear the force of improvisational necessity working through the players, causing modal strategies to implode in favour of a more robust, functionally elastic logic. When the music is thus exploratory, this nerve-jangling and highwire, it may run the risk of failing in terms of imposed





performance expectations or musical conventions but artistically it's always at its most potent.

For Bailey, free improvisation's revolutionary period lasted from the late 1960s to the early 70s, taking in Spontaneous Music Ensemble's *Karyeon*, Tony Oxley's unlikely major label trilogy, *The Baptised Traveller*, *4 Compositions For Sextet and Ichnos*, Peter Brötzmann's *Nipples*, Iskra 1903's debut and a clutch of early incus sides.

Iskra 1903, named after the pre-revolution Russian newspaper published by Lenin, was the most important of his early groups, a trio that also featured bassist Barry Guy and trombonist Paul Rutherford. Rutherford's conceptions were furious, egotistical and often deeply humorous, sabotaging the trombone's capacity for orchestral pomp and big band swagger with ecological mimicry and deconstructive noise, while Guy played the bass like a bow and arrow, launching scratchy fusilliads on tortuously stretched strings. At first the aureola clarity of the trio's playing can sound forbidding – musical primitives engaged in an all-out assault on prettified, bourgeois aesthetics – but in their determination to establish musical community via what mainstream culture would define as imbecilic, and to make music from seemingly unmusical 'accidentals', they were closest in spirit to later liberating aberrations like punk rock and Industrial noise.

Iskra 1903 were one of the best groups I've ever played with," Bailey asserts. "But after two or three years I'd had it, I couldn't stand it anymore. Everybody gets to know the music and as soon as that happens and you start playing the music, you stop improving. This recent group I have in London, Limescale [featuring Tony Bevan on bass saxophone, Alex Ward on clarinet, Tim Drennan on dactophone and Sonic Pleasure, who uses braille as percussion], it's at a very interesting stage because nobody knows the music yet. I mean the people in the group don't know what the fuck it should sound like. So they're working on their ears all the time, they're reacting. That's the way it should be."

For Bailey, free improvisation has to keep moving in order to stay vital, has to constantly devolve itself in order to live. The moment that it becomes codified, solidifying into a repeatable style, it dies. "It's like jazz," he states. "For me, jazz died in 1965. That's my cut-off point; I don't think that what came after that in jazz is very interesting. Once Charlie Parker died I stopped listening. My taste is for conventional jazz. I'd have arguments with Tony Oxley about this all the time. He loved Art Blakey but I think his music is a retrograde step from bebop. It's too formalised. The original bebop was all over the fucking place. They were always falling off a precipice. You didn't get that in hard bop, everybody knew what they were doing. With every music there is an exciting period when it's coming together and no one has a clue what it's supposed to sound like. That's when it's happening. And it's authentic. The only way you can get through that stuff is to do it. Once you've learned everything, it's over."

In accordance with his theory, Bailey now believes that free improvisation itself has become so codified and defined that it's effectively neutered, its many

recordings serving to fix musical identities and establish operative tropes while labels, promoters and festivals smittenly collude to provide a superstructure that facilitates career improvisors and associated specialists.

"I think improvisation's great era is over, its time is gone," he sighs. "My impression is that for any music to be really vibrant it lasts about seven or eight years. That's all of music, every music period. Bebop, Duke, whatever, there's a vibrant period that lasts seven or eight years and after that, it's over. Now I like the situation in free playing today because anybody plays it now and it's very easy to get people to play with. But no, of its best it was a different time. There was a very good period in New York, during the late 70s and early 80s, but that was that."

For Bailey, John Zorn and Eugene Chadbourne were a timely toe in the ear for a flagging Improv scene, mostly down to the asserted musical baggage they brought to the table. "They both brought a fantastic energy to the music," Bailey recalls. "I mean, Eugene was coming out of Country & Western and Zorn was... well, fuck knows. But New York was really exciting then and I spent a lot of time there, I actually tried to move there for a bit. There were three focus points. George Lewis was at The Kitchen and he was curating there, Bill Laswell had his studio and lots of people could use it. I made one or two records there. And then Zorn was everywhere, doing everything."

For free improvisation to have genuine, far-reaching repercussions it had to go into the wild, to infect other genres like rock, noise, electronics and folk and inform the operating strategies of a diverse range of musical thinkers. To do this, it had to escape the orbit of jazz completely, to become conversant in no-tongue. Bailey is notoriously opposed to saxophones and saxophomists. "You cannot play a saxophone and not make it sound like jazz," he insists. "You simply cannot do it. The guy who has come nearest to it is Anthony Braxton. At certain times he went beyond jazz. Steve Lacy could as well. But essentially there's no escaping it, I mean the fucking thing was built for jazz. I still play with saxophonists because... they're around. I like Tony Bevan on the bass sax and Alex Ward on clarinet because they seem to escape what I'm talking about. A bit. But when Tony plays the tenor and Alex plays the alto... No!"

Launched at London's ICA in May 1977, Bailey's Company Week events were an early attempt to find a way out of the impasse created, ironically enough, by the voraciousness with which free improvisation took hold across various jazz communities. He intended it as a platform for cross-genre improvisatory dialectics. As well as drawing on American jazz musicians like Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith and Steve Lacy, European improvisers like Han Bennink and Akasha Mengelberg, and UK players like Evan Parker and Steve Beresford, Bailey would invite invigorating wildcards, including Heavy Metal conceptualist Buckethead, electronic percussionist/programmer Iku Mori, sampling composer David Shear, violinist Alexander Balanescu and Jim O'Rourke, then primarily working as a tabletop guitarist. Seven years earlier, Bailey had also started Incus, along with Parker and Oxley, as a way of documenting their various musical breakthroughs in

the face of the inevitable withdrawal of initial major label support. Although he remains dismissive of recordings of improvisation ("Listen to it once and forget it," he insists, though he might be being facetious – it's never easy to tell), Bailey continues to release recordings via the label and has now branched out into a CD-R series of burned-on-request documents of live performances called *Sidelines*. As a working musician, releasing recordings remains an economic necessity.

"The surprising thing is that Evan Parker and I ever worked together," Bailey states, when asked about the early days of Incus. "For a period, up to the mid-70s, we had a lot in common musically, and so we started the label together with Tony Oxley. But from that point onwards Evan increasingly went into the solo thing and I started Company, as I took completely opposite approaches. I just wanted to play with as many different people as possible, so it's not a surprise that we split up."

"It wasn't an amicable split," he confesses. "I tend to get a bit mouthy. I just get abusive really. He had every right to be offended. Basically, he wanted to leave Incus and he wanted to do it legally. I told him to fuck off. We don't have to do it legally. Just get out. He wouldn't do that." Prior to this, Parker and Bailey had endured a turbulent personal and musical history. Many shows by *Musica Improvisation Company*, a group that featured Parker and Bailey as well as Hugh Davies and Jamie Muir, consisted of the duo trading riffs and raspberries while Davies manhandled his electronics and Muir dribbled blood capsules from his mouth: musical theatre at its dysfunctional, stomach churning best. "We were always going," Bailey admits, before turning all mock conspiratorial. "Let me tell you something," he confides. "You know those steps leading up to La Rambla just along from here? Well, I'm coming down there one day and there's Evan sitting at the bottom of the steps! Begging! And I thought, fuck, all that practising and hustling and dining out with Arts Council bureaucrats and there he is sitting begging! So I thought for old time's sake I'd give him a couple of Euros and he looks up and gives me this really warm smile. It was then that I knew he wasn't him." Boom, boom.

One of the main theoretical debates between Bailey and Parker has been the possibility, or even the desirability, of genuinely non-dialectic improvisation. "For me, I think of non-dialectic playing as an 'art,'" Bailey declares. "The way I play would absolutely not fit any music other than free improvisation. It doesn't mean that free improv is an idiom. I've never thought to play freely you can associate with a style, at least for me." But Bailey's guitar playing is unmistakable – he has an immediately identifiable style. "I have a style, yeah, but that has come out of the music," he insists. "When I first started playing I'd play a bit of jazz, style of Jim Hall or whatever, but I would not have been interested in trying to take that into free playing. I didn't want to know about that, I wanted to start from scratch. The way I play, I think, lets me take off from nowhere. I'm not committed to anything so I can play with all kinds of people who want to play with me." Still, he admits that it's difficult not fall back on strategies that he's used before. "Oh yeah, I do that," he concedes. "But that's weakness. It's a bit of fun

though. For instance when I'm playing with Han Bennink he likes that, so I play a couple of tunes and keep him happy. My style has changed a bit over the years. It has certainly changed since I moved to Spain, though. I'm now trying to play without a plectrum, using all my fingers. I've never done that. Well, I used to many years ago but I don't know how to do it. I'm mainly playing with my thumb, sometimes on all the strings. It's because of physical things, I can't hold the plectrum as well anymore, that finger has given way. It's old age, old age has given me an opportunity to play with the thumb. At the moment it has reduced my speed, I do a lot of practising and I get a very sore thumb."

Despite Bailey's antipathy towards idiomatic players, the bulk of his most rewarding recent work has been conducted in the shadow of genre. In the late 90s, on Zorn's suggestion, he cut a staggering set of encounters with inspired rhythm sections: *Sesso* with Japanese Punk-punk duo The Rums, *The Last Wave* with Miles Davis/Lifetime drummer Tony Williams and bassist Bill Laswell, and *Misaké* with Prime Time/Music Revelation Ensemble members Jamasadeen Tacuma on bass and Calvin Weston on drums. "Playing with Tacuma and Weston was great," Bailey smiles. "They couldn't give two fucks about who I am or what I do. They're there and they're playing this semi-funk shit, I'm over here doing my own thing, and somehow we just meet in the middle. I asked them, as I always do when I play with someone who has played with Ornette Coleman, what are harmelodics? Nobody knows. Nobody can explain it. I asked them if Ornette ever explained it to them, they were like, no, no. Well, what is it? No idea. Nobody knows what the fuck it is. It's a mystery."

"I really like those Rums guys," he continues. "We had a meal with them at a Chinese restaurant and Zorn said, 'Why don't you guys play together?' We recorded *Sesso* the next day and I played with them many times after that. Everything was all right until they thought they could play free music. What worked was when they were doing what they did and I did what I did and we met in the middle. But unfortunately they started coming towards me, they thought it was a piece of piss, this improvisation lark. Then it was all over. I don't mind the rock, sometimes what I do relates to it and sometimes it doesn't. I use feedback, stuff like that. I used to use a wah-wah pedal, back in 1968, 69 at the Little Theatre [legendary London venue widely regarded as the birthplace of free improvisation, thanks to its open nights run by drummer John Stevens]. Hendrix style? 'No, not fucking Hendrix style,' he bursts, aghast. "You don't do it like that, you do it very slow. Well, I did it very slow. I don't know about Hendrix style, I had never heard him then. The first time I knew anything about Hendrix I was in a club in Germany and there was a magazine which said on the front, 'Jim ikt tot', I thought, oh, I never fucking heard him, but really, I'll try anything. Except computers, I don't like that. Lounge electronics. That's what they are. I think of it as lounge electronics. When I was curating at Tonic in New York two or three years ago, the woman who runs it likes that stuff and she insisted I used one or two of these electronic groups. I noticed when I would go in and listen that all the performers had like a table and a lamp and a bottle of water, and they were

mumbling away and the audience were all talking to each other and that's like lounge jazz, it's there to serve a purpose, so that there's no silence. Lounge electronics. No, I don't like it, if you're asking me do I like it, no, I don't like it."

One of Bailey's unlikeliest hookups was with DJ Nini, a Junglist from Birmingham who laid down a tape of cracked beats as anchor to some of Bailey's most disobedient electric guitar. Although the recording that came out of the sessions, 1996's *Guitar, Drums 'N' Bass (Await)*, featured a much more polite and tingly sounding take on Jungle rhythms than Bailey had hoped for, it remains an exhilarating showcase for some of his most dynamic playing, marrying trilling, arpeggiated metal stylings with on-the-nut tempo changes and a cliche-bombing use of overdrive. "I don't like drone, I like speed," Bailey says. "Guitar, Drums 'N' Bass just wasn't lively enough for me, I would have preferred it if it had been much livelier. Where I live in Hackney is where one branch of drum 'n' bass, when they called it Jungle, came up. They had the loudest station on my FM band, completely illegal, but they were just down the street from me, so I said to Zorn, 'Listen to this shit, how do you fancy a record?' He wanted me to play with rhythm sections, I said, 'Well, instead of bass and drums how about drum 'n' bass?' He'd never heard of it, so I sent him a copy of some of that stuff that I'd taped off the station and he said, Fine. I said, 'I'll use these local guys from the radio.' And he said, 'No, you can't, you have to get someone we can hire.' I don't know why. The kids down the street were playing some fantastic shit, very exciting, I used to practise with it. That was how I got into it, it was all over the place, like the bass, no drummer would play with a bass player like that and no bass player would play with a drummer like that. They very seldom match. Also I liked the station because they used to order pizza over the air and when some guy didn't turn up for their show they'd be like, 'Come on, Peter, where are you?' They had this great relaxed thing. Wish I'd have met those guys because then it would have been a better record."

Contrary to the prevailing characterisation of free improvisation as being an impossibly cerebral, unmotivated music, mostly down to the players' determination to eschew emotional shorthand and rapid sentimental modes in favour of establishing more rigorous and authentically expressive formulations, Bailey identifies much of his own music as operating in identifiable emotional terms—

"On the whole, people like music that they can shake their ass to or cry over," he asserts. "I mean I'm talking mass appreciation here. When I listen to popular music, I cry. Karen says, 'What's the matter with you? I'm listening to her records. But that happens in my own music as well, I get emotionally involved playing with certain people, in fact I'm always emotionally involved to some degree. There are particular players that bring out strong emotions, sometimes playing with the bassist Joelle Léandre I find... moving. She plays with a lot of emotion and I find that to respond to it is quite, well, it has to be emotional. But I'm not against emotional. I did two nights playing with William Parker and John Zorn, which came out as *Hansas*. That was very emotional for me. I had a fantastic time, a very good time. You can be

moved to tears not just through emotion, though. Sometimes you're moved due to the fact that something is just so perfect. It's just like, 'Wow! Think of that!' But that's not the important part. There are other things, I wouldn't do it for that reason. Playing. That's what it is about. Playing is like living but better."

Despite his antagonism towards solo performance, some of Bailey's most affecting sides have been his solo sets. *Pieces For Guitar*, released in 2002, features some of his most haunting creations, as well as the earliest recordings of his solo work, including a startling set of actual compositions. There's something supremely lonely about his playing here, his guitar tone and the singularity of his attack giving each note the feel of a perfect sphere, his phrases conjuring chains of brief possible worlds. This kind of elegiac playing marks out most of his best solo discs, from the poignant torments of 1982's *Aida*, dedicated to the late Japanese promoter and critic Aigusa Aika, through to the sad feedback chorales of 2000's *String Theory*.

But by far his most controversial and personally resonant solo recording is 2002's *Balalads*, which sees Bailey returning once more to the music he played in his early danceband days, bringing all the questioning weight of 36 years of exploratory fervour to bear on songs like "You Go To My Head", "Gone With The Wind", "Body And Soul" and "Stella By Starlight". As a way in to Bailey's hermetic soundworld it's the perfect ticket, as his playing subtly progresses from sepia-toned nostalgia into pure sonic experience. Still, the fact that it took this kind of overt, generic context to prove to some jazz critics that Bailey could actually "play sticks in the crew."

"Yeah, I got an amazing response to that record from so many people," Bailey confirms. "The way it came about was that for Christmas I had got this new guitar and I was sitting playing on it and Zorn, who was there, was immediately like, 'Let's make a record of ballads!' I was like, 'I'm not going to do that' – but then I did it. When I first attempted it, I just played six or seven improvisations and then stuck a ballad on the end of each one. But then I thought, that's not fucking good, that's not ballads. What I began to notice, though, was that as I got towards the ballad it influenced the improvisation. So that's what I became most interested in, how it alters and colours the improvisation. That record to me is about improvising, not about playing tunes."

"This guy, a German," Bailey concludes, "asked me how much preparation I did for it and I told him between 15 and 20 years. It's true, I played all these things, all the time. The difference was the improvisation. I used to improvise on the chords before, but this time I just played whatever it was I wanted to play from the tune. Virtually all the tunes start with the riddim, the bridge, and I don't do any repeats. I don't know what I was improvising on. I wasn't improvising on the melody or the chords. It was just some feeling about the tune, some... I don't know I really don't. You can't articulate it. The old jazzers, when you asked them what they were doing, they would say, I just play, man. And that is a philosophical statement." □ [Inclus](http://www.houserecords.force9.co.uk) | [www.houserecords.force9.co.uk](http://www.houserecords.force9.co.uk). Ben Watson's *Derek Bailey And The Story Of Free Improvisation* is published by Verso

"MY SON SAYS TO ME, I'VE BEEN  
LISTENING TO YOU FOR 20 YEARS AND I STILL  
DON'T KNOW WHAT THE FUCK  
YOU'RE DOING. HE'S A CHEMIST, SO I SAY,  
WELL, I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE FUCK  
YOU'RE DOING EITHER"



# Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

## Lovepump 15

Doll  
Sex With Girls Re  
The Fall  
Is This Park  
Clint Eastwood & Lydia Lunch  
Wayne's We Do It In The Road  
The Birthday Party  
8" Gold Blue  
Marc Almond & The Willing Sisters  
Mother F---t And Her F---d Daughters  
D.A.F.  
Sex Under Hell  
Rocked Hell & The Voidoids  
Love Comes In Spurts  
West Of Eden  
You Have Come In Your Hair And Your Disk Is Hanging  
Grit

James White And The Rascals  
String Quartets

Pracher  
Rock The Plan Away  
Static Toyz  
Mona, Selin & Me  
Black Flag  
Skip It Again  
Ultra-red  
Dale To Johnny Rio  
A Go-Go  
Too Many Cookies Spoil The Fun  
Alternative TV  
Love-Less Lamp

Compiled by The Kerb Grouse

## Malignant Boombox/ Cassette Only 15

Dead Machines  
Music For The 3rd Hour (Since 1992)  
Neil Campbell  
Walkman Music (Inn label)  
Jean Street  
Ghosts Of Ten (Armenian Tapes)  
Gumshoe Pot  
Mans For Cooked Cases (Armenian Jars)  
Aaron Dillaway  
Coyotes On Horseback (Hansel)  
David Bowie  
Melt It Back (Cheshire Sound)  
Three Legged Race  
& Tropical Sounds (Geddo GI Tando)  
James & Help Hospital  
Brain Dead (Hospitalised)  
Stereogas  
Ghettoblaster Project (Xmas)  
Hercules & The Rock Read  
The Corky Rocks (Bennell) [red]  
Smack Music 7  
Spiral Hill (Open Mouth)  
Various  
In The Power Store (Reheat 4000)  
Ovo  
Live In America, September 2001 (unrest)  
Momo Tazawako & Radulf Blaer  
Ghettoblaster (Stereogas)  
Bill Bixbe  
A Very Pissin' Muscle Rub (Mother Nun)

Compiled by Dylan Nykjaer, Chocolate Monk, Brighton  
www.jordkonsert.net

## Righteous LP Sleeve 15

Max Romeo  
Wish In A Bottle  
Guitar  
Woojaah  
Bob Marley  
Uptown Funk  
Peter Tosh  
Equal Rights  
The Mandarins  
Hot Hot Heat  
Pete Arkakapo-Kull  
Shakau  
Goda Wiliki  
Conqueror  
Bob Marley  
Soulvol  
Pete Arkakapo-Kull  
Zombie  
Bob Dylan  
Steve Avon Casing  
Pete Arkakapo-Kull  
Bones Of No Nation  
Pete Arkakapo-Kull  
Upper Deck  
Steve Wonder  
Hotel New Jersey  
Guitar  
Guitar  
The Mandarins  
Cresc

Compiled by Ghettoblaster, Pete Arkakapo-Kull's  
albion sleeve designer, exhibiting at this month's Black  
President show at London Barbacon (see Out There)

## The Office Ambience

Sam Red  
Dawn 2030 (Jut Yax)  
Spook  
Medulla (One Little Indian)  
Noise  
Vinegarplate (Song)

RTX  
Transmissions (Drag City)  
Akiko Rabellis  
Sonic Macrocyclone (Sonicdrift Sound)  
Whistler  
Pognante (Goddam)

Various  
Cannibalistic Cannibal Anthems: Kneen Folk And Pig  
Man In A Bubble (Bubble Frequencies)

Sexual Grubble  
A Glance At The Reddy (Fat Cat)

Cannis De Piv  
Dear Colleagues (Pub Pop)

Nurse With Wound  
Angry Electrical Fright (Speedy Cock Ood)  
(United States)

Sex Orgies Of Assassins  
The Blackestation (Strange Attractors Audio House)

RNSF  
Object 6 (Jacard)

Conrad Schatzler  
Gone Part II (Oscos)

The Stooges  
Will (Postal)

Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds  
Abattoir Bloom (Type O Negative (Mus))

Compiled by The Wine Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio stations, clubs, DJs, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email: charts@thewire.co.uk

See Berrow's death stick (see page 26)

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London, UK  
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Paris, France

# Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs and vinyl



## A career retrospective shows Jah Wobble's East End roots continue to peep through after 25 years of bass and dub-driven global explorations. By David Stubbs

### JAH WOBBLE

#### I COULD HAVE BEEN A CONTENDER

PROFOUND RECORDS

The story's been much told of the accidental manner in which John Waddle acquired his pseudonym. A drunken Sid Vicious, attempting to pronounce his name when introducing him at a party, came out with what sounded like "Jah Wobble". Recognising at once the perfect aptness of the moniker, Wobble seized on it, as if he were made there and then, convinced in Vicious's slurred vowels. The incident summarises in microcosm the relationship between punk and post-punk.

Wobble is the supreme riposte to the late Ian MacDonald's assertion that punk had destroyed the "skills base" of British music. Not that Wobble appears to be especially skillful. He can't sing, exactly – his are the deepest tones of the mischievous, self-taught alchemist. Meanwhile his basic vision has remained as constant as a signature since he first picked up the instrument and developed almost instantaneously the rubbery, angular style that snakes like cable through all of his work to the present day. The point is that it was only through punk that the flame of curiosity that lurked in this working-class ne'er-do-well East End boy was by chance allowed to light up his life, rather than be snuffed out by snakebite, infantile laddishness and institutionalised discouragement. There are still those who regard punk as something that died with Vicious in the Chelsea Hotel. Wobble embodies what punk died into.

Mates with The Sex Pistols but initially considered too delinquent to join them, he was Lydon's first choice on bass when he formed PIL. Thereafter, he has undertaken a lengthy evolutionary trek. Hear him singing earnestly on *The Invaders Of The Heart's "A13"*, of the road as a "guideline of the astral plain", and it's tempting to think that he has travelled far away from, even contradicted, his origins, embraced the sort of hippy wisdom he'd once have scoffed at. In fact, he has mapped out the full circle that punk came.

The three CDs here range from Wobble's early work with PIL, touch briefly on his early 80s solo work

before his re-emergence with *Invaders Of The Heart* and a massive second wind that has seen him work with a host of artists ranging from Shane McGowan and Mournah Senghor to Natascha Atiles and Brian Eno.

Included among the PIL tracks here are "Public Image" and "Swan Lake". If anything, they're even more perturbant in their open-slashed venom than when first released. Although it's Keith Levene's seething, aluminium guitars and Lydon's desirably caustic vocals that apparently dominate PIL, the dubby, elasticating note of Wobble's bass is deceptively vital. When Wobble quit PIL, they didn't survive long as a listenable concern without him.

In the early 80s, Wobble embarked on a series of collaborative works, including the *Sneakcharmer* EP with The Edge and the superb, Euro Poeman dub-funk of *How Much Are They?* with Can's Holger Czukay, whose ethnological shortwave experimentalism prefigured Wobble's future direction. Jeki Leibzeit, a longtime collaborator, also appeared on *How Much Are They?* His contained, tempestuous approach to rhythm was another influence on Wobble's playing, which has always rigidly underpinned the more diaphanous excursions of his various guest counterparts.

Press notes claim Wobble as practically a solo pioneer in World Music, which is hardly the case – not just Can but Belgium's Asbelik Malouf had preceded him in marking out possible trails between East and West, to name two. Still, Wobble's global horkenings ran deep. As a kid, growing up in mundane Stepney, he'd stand out from the shadows of the still active docks, dreaming of life at sea, distant countries, visions of shimmering minarets dancing in his imagination fed by nocturnal shortwave transmissions from Radio Cairo. He formed *Invaders Of The Heart* in the mid-80s but that decidedly occidental decade wasn't ready for the sound Wobble had in mind, as when the rivers of Miles Davis, dub, Can and Ornette Kalathoom would meet and merge.

As for Wobble himself, his personal life was in disarray – the boy, bitter "Betrayal" (released in 1980 as a 12"), reflects the Wobble mix, boozy and prone to confrontations, his personal and musical relationships breaking down. His bizarre 80s interlude

spent working for London Underground would prove a dark second act in his life, ultimately redemptive. He emerged sober from the tunnel into the 90s with a series of *Invaders Of The Heart* albums culminating in 1991's *Rising Above Bedlam*, represented here by "Visions Of You", with Sinéad O'Connor (shame they didn't include the bass monster "Bomba").

Much of Wobble's success was down to the lush, golden, muzzin-mongeesees he concocted with The Invaders, which occasionally, as on "Ketmag", recall unromantically the sleek of bland, Trip Hoppy Eastern tourism that followed in his wake. But Wobble was too restless to camp in that terrain for long. More intriguing has been his quiet, logical obsession with Cockney romantic ancestor William Blake: "Tyger, Tyger" and "Songs Of Innocence" figure in this collection, rendered in East End vowels that would probably not have been dissimilar from Blake's own. Ironies then, that he was castigated for supposedly "censoring" these sacred texts by fools who imagined he was indulging in punkish insolence. Truth was, Wobble had found a Mystic on his own doortstep.

There's much else to luxuriate in here – rich but subtly skewed Ambient with Eno on "Spinme" and on extracts from the recent *Elevator Music*, skirling reinvocations of ancestral British folk traditions on "Funeral March" and "A Man I Knew", a perfect, crunching oriental/dub hybrid on "Lam Yeng Way Dub" and "Passage To Hades", featuring Evan Parker, whose tenor sax drones mold a singular British tradition of free jazz with a wailing, Celtic unison. And there's "The Mystery Of Twilight Part 2", with Herbie Baud and Bill Laswell, a 24-minute, many-sided instrumental. The track indicates one of Wobble's most extraordinary qualities, a charismatic ability to act as a binding agent, pulling fellow musicians, to make things happen. This, coupled with a boundless energy that has taken him on 16-mile rambles across London, and more recently the moors, has ensured that, for all the variety of his music, he remains a fixed and permanent source of energy. His bass is the discreet pulse that indicates vital life signs. *I Could Have Been A Contender* affords an opportunity to celebrate a figure too easily taken for granted. □

**NOËL AKHOTÉ**  
ADULT GUITAR  
BLUER RAINBOW

This 20 track retrospective dates back 21 years to when guitariste Akhote was 13. It was assembled by David Grubbs (one of his many musical collaborators), alongside guitarists like Fred Frith, David Bailey and Eugene Chadbourne. From more than ten hours of tapes, But the title is slightly misleading, as most pieces here were recorded after 2000. Even so, the album does give an insight into how his style has developed. The earliest track is a fragment of a guitar class, where Akhote is made to breath up his jazz phrasing by playing against the rhythm. Nearer adulthood, he knows out a precious verse of Ornette Coleman's "Madvan Woman", on which he plays all the instruments. Winding forward to a recent solo piece like "Número 122", where the guitar shatters through looped feedback, reverb and drones in a style more characteristic of 2003's *Ren*, the listener might well ask, how did we get from there to here?

Prominently, the most recent tracks tell the class. Akhote's roots in the swing of Charlie Christian and Django Reinhardt are revealed in a repetitive batch of standards, including Vidor Youmans' "I Want To Be Happy" and Burton Lane's "How About You?". His freely sprung readings respect the original tunes knowing that they are strong enough to withstand some serious treatment. Pivotal is an extraordinary version of Jerome Van Heusen's "It Could Happen To You", in which Akhote's dourness at it times obliquely playing at tension or teasing out material from the cracks before the changes. The template is further warped on Akhote's plangent "Tearus Swing 1917", where soft ensemble jazz structures start to disintegrate into abstraction.

**JEFF ARNAL /  
GORDON BEEFEMAN /  
SETH MISTERKA**  
RARAVIS  
GENERATE CO

**DIETRICH EICHMANN &  
JEFF ARNAL**  
**THE TEMPERATURE DROPPED AGAIN**  
LFD CO

BY PHILIP CLARK

These releases, recorded at the end of 2002, highlight how percussive Jeff Arnal's baroque sense of time and imaginative deployment of colour have combined into a highly original concept. Raravis features his new trio with Bradon Ghost Dance Ensemble saxophonist Seth Misterka and Gordon Beierstein on electric piano. At the center of operations is Arnal's hi-hat, which slices the pulse into the imperceptible subtle pieces feeding the capricious activity flowing into the rest of his kit. Sharply accented snares preferentially have rhythmically buoyant texture to give his playing a heightened level of imminent dissolution, and in the *A Silent Way* quality of Beierstein's electric piano is Miserka drumming in a context that normally stresses the brittle attack of an acoustic piano. His gently limping arpeggios dominate the opening of the first track, "Dead", sending out enough warning signals to suggest that the tea might be Ambient minimalists. However,

Misterka's underlying walls become increasingly insistent, and the music must seek choppier terrain. He's never short of an inventive line and even his most Brahmsian moments feel disciplined and grounded. Nor is he stuffy on "Peripherals", about creating washes of melodic lines to wrap around Beierstein's accompaniments. This approach to contrapuntal improvisation is surprisingly traditional, but the two know how to keep things on the boil. Here, lines constantly get crossed in unexpected ways. Arnal's playing with German pianist and composer Dietrich Eichmann on *The Temperature Dropped Again* has a harder edge. Eichmann studied with Alexander von Schlippenbach, Wolfgang Rihm and Frederic Reznik, and his precise note choices are controlled by his composer's brain. On "half point" the discussion starts into being with deliberate awkwardness — Arnal's kit and other metallic sounds become like pitched chimes struggling to locate exact equivalents for Eichmann's playfully shifting lines. Elsewhere, the piano's long rolling on low single pitch creates more of a continuum, and the final "For Beno Louvain" develops into a massive 16-minute, restlessly surging arc.

**BIGG JUS**  
**BLACK MAMBA SERUMS V2.0**  
BIGG JAM CO

BY JOHN MURRAY

In the wake of Company Flow's demise, the inimitably resourceful ELP has made most of the running, with both her own work and the currently disappearing Definitive Jux imprint. Her old thumping partner Bigg Jus, in contrast, has been harder to spot. As leftfield HipHop has become more evasive, Jus has responded by burrowing deeper into the underground: producing 2001's *Rastafari Rhymes* mini-album, a joint album with Diko Bohemian as Nephilim Mutation Systems and, briefly, the record label Subweise in his new home base of Austria.

Black Mamba Serums V2.0 goes some way to explaining Jus's evasiveness. The original version of the album was recorded in 2003 but pulled from the schedules by the prophetically paranoid artist just before its 11 September 2001 release date. Although the first take sneaked out in Japan last year (and is included here as bonus MP3 file), this belated release presents Bigg Jus's enhanced part-13 version. His rapping still sounds distractingly raw — sloping in and out of focus among the grubby basskit backdrop, sparring with sprightly piano lines and craggy, smothered soul loops that are reminiscent of Stashhausen's *Sternzeit*. But Robert Wyatt's frosty innocence enters to bring a welcome, fragile light and a dazed, inscrutable yearning: "Do it now" he implores, "Shake us out of a heavy deep sleep." Soaring over the long, low bell of a bass voice, Björk's contribution is one of the album's finest moments:

"Who Is It?" is Medélia's most approachable track. Prepared by skittering, post-Garage rhythm programming and rich, rolling bass frequencies, it allows into a classically Björkian stroboscopic chora reminiscent of "Hyperballad". Yet there are endless explanatory details beneath the surface. A backdated cymbal is revealed as a serpentine endown wash, with countless vocal snippets clustering and twitching like insects in the messeons of the mix.

Medélia is not a complete success. "Desired Constitution" is disarmingly banal and "Piano II" descends into a cacophonous mélée of frenzied cries, tortured grunts and gruff, doglike

moans on the concluding "Say Goodbye", sprung and uncluttered where as much of the album is uninterestingly dense, it's not just the hard fought optimism of the lyrics that comes as a relief.

**BJÖRK**  
**MEDÉLIA**  
ONE LITTLE INDIAN CD  
BY CHRIS SHARP

Given the attention lavished recently on Björk's back catalogue, you might think she has been doing her eyes more on the past than the future. But *Medélia*, her first album since 2001's *Homogenic*, is possibly the most daring record she's ever made, spring for a far starker and more student sound than its predecessor.

The opening "Please Is All Mine" establishes Medélia's credentials — densely atmospheric, slightly hard to read. A keening vocal intonation uses with non-intensity, as surreal, erotic horror movie overtones compounded by breathless, dose-mixed female panting and a throaty suspicion of male laughter. It achieves its thought effect using little more than the human voice and a smattering of programmed percussions.

Medélia was not originally conceived as a *cappella* experiment. It started life three years ago as a special guest and instrument-laden extravagance recorded in 12 locations including New York, Iceland and Venice. But as the title suggests (it's Latin for "for me"), Björk eventually felt the need to strip away the accumulated layers, to get back to the essentials of the song — the vocal melodies.

Consequently, there are moments of absolute simplicity. "Show Me Fairness" is a fleeting snapshot of plainchant, a single propulsive vocal informed only by a tastefully ecclesiastical mesh. Sung in Icelandic, "Kvöldu" is based on a piece precomposed by Johann Þorður Vilard and features a 20 voice choir; it belongs more to the soundworld of the 19th century than the 21st, combining the sweet astringency of a Victorian carol with the stately, tragic counterpart of a Brahms mazurka.

Still, Medélia is mostly a modernist experience, with Björk using her store of vocal tales as digitally processed building blocks, "Old Brian" and "Wednesday" combine clapped up vocal fragments, a single repeated syllable providing a rhythmic pulse, and other phrases to produce dizzying interwoven textures. "Submarin" opens with a fizzing, whirling whirlpump, a manic ascent of Stockhausen's *Sternzeit*. But Robert Wyatt's frosty innocence enters to bring a welcome, fragile light and a dazed, inscrutable yearning: "Do it now" he implores, "Shake us out of a heavy deep sleep." Soaring over the long, low bell of a bass voice, Björk's contribution is one of the album's finest moments:

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**Matchless Recordings  
and Publishing**



**MRCD56**  
'the birdkin's  
whistle'  
Eddie Prevost trio  
(with Tom Chant,  
saxophone clarinet  
and John Edwards  
double bass).



**MRCD57**  
'Irreproducible  
evidence'  
Ewan Parker tenor  
saxophone and Eddie  
Prevost drums.



**MRCD58**  
'discrete mirrored'  
John Tilbury piano,  
prepared piano and  
organ, Eddie Prevost  
strangled barrel,  
tam-tam, dragnet  
and other percussions.



**MRCD59**  
'percussionist songs'  
Roby Shallowsky  
percussion.  
Playing music by  
Christian Wolff (Wolf)  
also performs on  
some tracks).



**MINUTE  
PARTICULARS**  
Meanings in music  
making in the wake  
of historical  
maladjustments  
and other essays

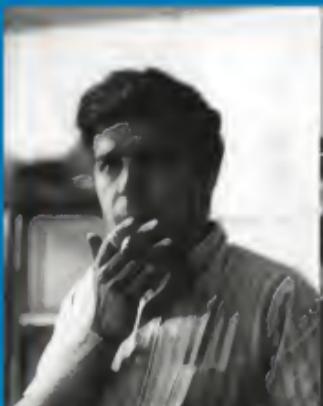
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## Rob Young celebrates Ramon Sender, a neglected figure of the 60s avant garde who pursued his quest for enlightenment via tape loops



Ramon Sender, early 60s (left) and at a San Francisco Tape Music Center performance



### RAMON SENDER

**WORLDFOOD**  
LOUDART MUSIC CD

"Ramon, you're a fool but I love you," Ramon Sender received that message from the Sun, dozing in a cave in California, one hazy day in 1968. He had always been prone to visions – in 1963 he dropped a tab of LSD with Steve Reich and re-lived his entire life backwards to the moment of conception. Now the 32 year old had repaired to this location like a hippy St Jerome, fresh from the Trips Festival in San Francisco which he had co-motivated along with a small auralistic team that also comprised Stewart Brand. Cooling off in his solitary hole, Sender received the solar impetus that would drive him to participate in one of the late 20th century's great countercultural experiments.

Ramon Sender is one of the most unjustly forgotten figures of post-war counterculture and music, electronic or otherwise. He was descended from a Spanish family that suffered cruelly in the Civil War, his mother executed by Franco's fascists. Exiled to the US with his father, in the mid-60s he was primarily concerned with promoting the San Francisco Tape Music Center, a legendary birthplace of American radicals, principally Morton Subotnick, Pauline Oliveros and Terry Riley. Sender assisted Subotnick on a number of productions (many of the advances made by this gang were a product of collective activity, not authored compositions) and helped him accustomise to the Buchla Series 200 modular synthesizer on which he was to imagine works like *Touch and Silver Apples Of The Moon*. It was a workshop run on a shoestring, in which a stable of experimental and conceptual musicians groped towards new methods of (dis)organising sound at happenings and performances that occasionally

edged conservatory-style presentation into the terrain of psychedelic rock. Sender was always an early adopter of mere violets, and his trippy events took the group's advances furthest into the social domain.

At that time Sender had reportedly already been discussing the possibilities of communal living with Stewart Brand. Utopianism was breezing around the Bay Area probably more than anywhere else on Earth at that particular moment, poised on the cusp of the 1967 Monterey Festival's momentous explosion of colour-saturated rock fusions. A chain of coincidences and mutual friends led Sender and his girlfriend to the Morning Star ranch in Sonoma County, which was owned by Lou Gottlieb. Gottlieb had been a member of a popular folk trio called The Limeliters (a model for The Folsomians, Christopher Guest's trio in the recent film *A Mighty Wind*), but in 1966 was semi-retired, dabbling in varieties of religious experience at the ranch he'd bought for a snip, set in a strip of Edenic Redwood forest. Gottlieb died in 1996, but Morning Star became a beacon for the Free Land Movement, a utopian commune that survives to this day (Sender is its chief archivist). In the years that followed, hundreds of folks slouched towards Sonoma County to get naked, smoke draw and drop acid, grow the vegetables which became the Diggers' free handouts, link hands in innocent celebration of Mann Nature and all her bounty, stare unblinkingly into the sun and tap into the magnificence of the cosmos. The peace and harmony that Sender and friends encountered during their initial sojourns in the forest was inevitably eroded. However, the story remains a key moment in American counterculture: Krishna and Christ trading negative dialectics on the shore of Walen Pond.

In the light of this backstory, these newly excavated recordings from Sender's back pages take on a particularly rosy hue. Loudart Music have commendably inaugurated a programme of Sender releases with

*Worldfood*, comprising two pieces for tape loops created in 1964 during the Tape Music Center days, a few years before the *Morning Star* experiment got underway. Sender's *Worldfood* project is a series of numbered pieces; and this CD collects two of them VII (to See Him With My Eyes) is half an hour of screaming appurture. Sender hung loops of tape over a series of playing heads that had been turned to face upwards, with an empty tape reel hanging at the bottom of the loop as a counterweight. The loops themselves were shreds of an Easter cantata Sender had written years earlier at music college. The original was a slightly ragged choral recording, but here the chorus mimics an apocalypse of light deluging the retina, a perpetually tolling cascade of waterfalling cadences, somewhere between Arvo Part's *Cantus In Memorian Benjamin Britten* and Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room*. It ends at the same intense pitch as it begins, a carion of voices recorded in a jaggat of overdues and crosshatchings.

*Worldfood* VII, the 43 minute work that fills the rest of the disc, is a manipulation of sounds sourced from a 1960s Ampex computer tester. Sender taped square wave tones and vibrations emitted by this primitive binary box, and the piece is a long sequence of lamenations, manipulations and variations of sections of the tapes. It's less of a blaze of glory than VII, but it bears a distinct personality stamp and an organic quality that sets it far apart from generic mid-60s computer music. Few of the era's collegiate composers were on anything like Sender's ego-sublimated quest for enlightenment, and there is nothing academic about these carillinear noises whose very strangeness suggests they are ciphers acoustically encoding a new understanding of warped time. Let's hope his storefront preserves more musical manna left over from his days in Paradise. □

gows, "Where Is The Land" is a lumber and spasmotic agglomeration of unruly elements, shovelled along by tumbling, staccato thumps and rasping, faintly throat singing. The quirky, limp duds of "Triumph Of A Heart", meanwhile, closes the album on an equivocal note.

At its best, Medusa teeters with a sense of serendipitous discovery with Björk's singing (when unprogrammed) as sublime as ever. But the odd, untrained juxtapositions and abrupt endings arouse the suspicion that its apparently radical music operasi is actually a salvage operation – despite the tarnished treasure to be found in its swirling, oceanic depths.

### SETH P BRUNDEL

#### DEVILS PAWN

#### ASYLHETIC CO

BY DEREK WALMBLEY

"Beavis of the dead! pawn upon us!" This is Miami producer and rapper Seth P Brundel's debut, and some long delayed political frustrations are finally being released. Brundel is the truth divisor, the weet – "to overstate this, men ascend to thy throne" – carrying proponents of neo-McCarthyism and power-hungry policies. The dehumanizing effects of rampant capitalism appear to him with blinding intensity, and Devil's Pawn relates his vision in 17 tracks of stem rhyming, rapped at double speed to get all his targets in, over sober, unadorned rhythms in the DJ Premier lineage.

Musical rigour is mandatory for the serious Brundel, and Devil's Pawn is a dense hip-hop communiqué with not an ounce of lyrical fat. But the sonic minimalists, perhaps intended as a contrast to a US culture of consumption and its resulting debris, can simply sound like standard Hip-Hop appeal; the omnipresent took took a distinct neuroticism for a tripper to expand at length over. By sounding so standardised, Devil's Pawn runs the risk of sounding as much a commercial product as the objects of its wrath.

Apart from a shifty, off-kilter liltus on the aptly titled "Insecurity", the relentless regularity causes the music to slip into the background. Some of the album's best bits are its atmospheric hues of bluesy guitar and sad, Safe-issue platos. It suggests a powerlessness totally at odds with Brundel's empowered rapper. In fact, far from "going out in a blaze of glory", as promised, Devil's Pawn is run like a pessimistic, thoughtful left-wing political lecture delivered over headbanging, implacable beats,

### CADAVER NECROSIS CANDLESTICK CD

BY PHIL FREEMAN

If we acknowledge Napalm Death's Scum as Year Zero, G禮don's 20th birthday is coming up fast. Stripping the flesh from Heavy Metal and rubbing its bones in the dirt, G禮don asks only three things of its practitioners: speed, noise and fury. Metal can manage at least two of these. Cadaver offers the whole package, plus the often ignored secret weapon of self-aware humour. Their lyrics and song titles take Metal's twin obsessions – morbidity and cartoonish evil – and turn them on their heads. They combine the poker-faced intensity of Latvian metal, making it difficult to realise if and when they're joking, and the self-mocking subversive horn writing of the Dutch Impulse scene. By embracing gird's clichés and working at them, Cadaver revitalise the form.

None of this grandeur would count for anything if the music were substandard. But Necrosis is terrific, the most life-spirited release since Anselm Kiefer's horrifying *The Ninth Reich*. Necrosis gear that兄弟 as strictly as G禮don force the creative musicians to make any subtle twists worth the trouble. There's a burst of psychotically guitar tone on "Necro As Fuck", a drum sound buried in electronic distortion on "Harrowmaw". By throwing such curveballs at the listener, while continuing to provide the raw, nihilistic thrills grind demands, Cadaver point a skeletal finger down a new path.

### NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS ABBATOIR BLUES/THE LYRE OF ORPHEUS

MUTE 33CD

BY CHRIS SHARP

"A man should try everything once," Thomas Beaudoin observed, "except folk dancing and incest." Many jaded listeners would add a third prohibition: the double album. In a career that's beginning to assume epic proportions, Nick Cave has made savings: an album – best never before has he forsaken his post-punk roots and released a two-disc set. Like most of his output since 1997's *The Boatman's Call*, the two new albums are driven by the Christian faith that Cave can't quite bring himself to embrace, and the Christian imagery that has held him in thrall for more than two decades. But while recent records have mapped on hushed and introspective ballads, the twin album format has

somewhere given The Bad Seeds increased license – consequently, they periodically rock out with something approaching total conviction.

The opener "Get Ready For Love" is a rattling call-and-response song, complete with spray-on Gawai cheer; it's the grand Cave tradition. It's an update on the runaway remashackie groove of "Hard On For Love" (*from Your Funeral... My Trial*). But whereas that was an unabashed celebration of sex, "Get Ready For Love" sublimates the primal urge, directing it towards heaven: "Praise Him!" Cave implores, and you can almost believe his famous. Moreover, the older subject matter, the gloomy, grinding grandeur of earlier epics like "Lipless" or "The Mercy Seat", has been refurbished. Here the classic rock licks echo Jimi Hendrix's "Crosswate Traffic" and Eddie Van Halen, exhibiting a disconcertingly glossy sheen. Other tracks in a similarly exhilarating vein include "Hiding All Away" – a stark, lurching epic punctuated by grimy avalanches of noise – and the shivering, parkinsonian singalong, "There She Gath, My Beautiful Woe". The sheer energy of these performances almost makes up for the money array of micturatio, Bad Seeds-by-numbers grooves populating the less inspiring corners of these discs.

Lyrical things are just as inconsistent. "Get Ready For Love" neatly echoes WH Auden's "Musee Des Beaux Arts", another meditation on the ordinary human contact in which miracles and martyrs take place. Throughout, exotic love is the portal that leads to revelation, and, in the best passages, there's a radiant sense of the infinite possibilities of redemption. The Biblical language sharing with something like its original brightness. There's also wordplay and inadvertent humour in abundance – Cave rhymes "System" with "Insane" and "Orpheus" with "unfeeling", and at times his unadmitting tactics are genuinely funny: "I look at you, and you look at me, and deep in our hearts we know it/that you weren't much of a muse, and I wasn't much of a poet." But many a true word is spoken in jest. Cave continually falls back on image from nature – and the endless, warping parades of trees, hedgehogs, birds, brooms and brooks take its toll, robbing even the truly inspired moments of impact. A shame, because in many ways this is his finest output since *The Boatman's Call*. Sadly, few among the unconverted will make it through all 17 tracks to the mournful, quietly wonderful "D Children" lurking at the end of the journey.

### CHARALAMBIDES

#### JOY SHAPES

KRANKY CD

BY MARC MASTERS

After 12 years in Houston, Charalambides have spread out across the globe. Tom Carter now lives in San Francisco, Christina Carter in Philadelphia and Heather Leigh Murray in Glasgow. Their music has expanded accordingly. Joy Shapes, the trio's first new album for Kranky, stretches five tracks across 75 minutes, but seems to last forever. The trio's patient sound explorations glow fine down to just about static, so that each second can be fully explored before the next one arrives.

Joy Shapes begins with its longest track, the 22-minute "Here Not Here", previously heard on Christina Carter's 2002 solo CD-R *Future In Red*. Her version began with the same elongated guitar pluck and floating vocal, but it faded away after six minutes. Here the trio put at the song's simplest ends until it encircles the Earth, building a quaking resonance of sound out of a minimalist mix of sources. "Stroke" is a study in pure chime, as voices, guitars and bells all exude the tremor of high-pitched metal. The title track is a raw, flowing prayer that creates a 360-degree environment out of what could have been mere background. Throughout, the trio's ability to tame slow motions into absorbing journeys is mystic. If Joy Shapes is like *Monument*, a mission à la Tom Carter's 2001 solo CD-R, is *Isisen* of two tracks, the first is two minutes of near silence, the second lasts 45 minutes and hardly moves. But Carter's elusive guitar playing is more about space than time. He approaches capriciously, huddling under the surface. Most is almost inaudible, like a movie whose inessential fates to black dwarf its surviving pictures. In fact it's closer to abstract film than music, a microscopic examination of the line between sound and silence akin to Stan Brakhage's chirography studies. Loud points eventually do emerge, some abrupt enough to vibrate speakers, but on the whole *Monument* is receding and blurry, an aridling foray into the depths of distance.

### COBRA KILLER

76/77

MONKIE ENTERPRISES CD + DVD

BY SUSANNAH VINCENTELLI

What happened to Cobra Killer? Do their self-titled debut from 1998, *Gina V D'Dio* and

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Retro Futurism: Intonarumori Orchestra in Tokyo

## VARIOUS MUSICA FUTURISTA/THE ART OF NOISES SALON LTM CD

### INTONARUMORI ORCHESTRA INTONARUMORI ORCHESTRA OFFICIAL CD

Of the major early 20th century artistic movements, Futurism had less influence on British artists than dada or surrealism; none had a significant effect on British music. In Italy, however, Futurism is widely acknowledged as a major contributor to 20th century Italian art. It was also the first artistic movement in which music and performance were major elements, comparable to Fluxus in the 1960s.

The first substantial recording of Futurist music was *Musica Futurista*, issued in 1980 by Cramps. This double LP (later reissued on CD) also included recordings from the 1920s and 1930s made by the group's founder, poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (including the enigmatic *Battle Of Adrienopoli*), interspersed with piano pieces by Futurist and Intemperied composers recorded by Deneile Lombardi, plus two more unusual realisations, especially of the painter turned musician Luigi Russolo. Prior to the release, the post-war avant-garde's knowledge of Russolo's work had been based either on his writings, or, more usually, on hearsay.

Other recordings have featured some of this material, including two LPs, *Dada For Now* (ARK, Liverpool), and, curated by James Neiss (now James Nice), *Sub Rosa's Futurism & Dada Reviewed*. The latter was reissued on CD with two additional tracks, and rereleased by Nice in Britain on his own label LTM. Now comes *Musica Futurista/The Art Of Noises*, featuring LTM's offshoot, Salón. This contains most of the original Cramps album, digitally remastered and with two additional tracks.

Our direct knowledge of Russolo's music and soundworld is limited. None of his intonarumori (noise intoners) have survived, and we have only the seven bar opening of one of his scores. Since 1975, based on Russolo's patent, verbal descriptions and several photographs, some 35 reconstructions of noise intoners from all the ten families that he devised have been built in Italy, the USA, Germany (subsequently destroyed – maliciously), France (one)

and Japan. I know of only eight new compositions that feature these reconstructions.

On the Cramps album, and now *Musica Futurista*, Lombardi also realised Marinetti's *Cinque Sintesi/ RadioGnucleo*, five radiophonic collages from 1933 that prefigured John Cage, including substantial intonarumori, from which a multitracked realisation of the seven bars of Russolo's *Risveglio Di Una Città (Awakening Of A City)* was made. The remainder of this anthology consists of original recordings by Marinetti (*Adrenopoli* and two poems, *Defezione Di Futurismo* and *Parole In Libertà*), Aldo Giuntini's 1931 piano improvisations *Sintesi Musicali Futuristiche* (produced by Marinetti) and two works by Antonio Russo (Cosati and Seminato) combining his brother's intonarumori (or rather undifferentiated background growls and roars) with a chamber orchestra. There's also Lombardi's recordings of piano works, which range from programmatic, multifaceted pieces originally written for orchestra, like Pratella's three dances *Le Goerne (War)*, which mutate a French folksong, and Luigi Grandi's *Aerodromo (Dognight)*, via more contemplative abstract ones by Franco Casavola and Silvo Mix to the conventional fox-trot, by Giuntini and Casavola's *Danza delle Sonnacce (Dance Of The Monkeys)*; plus two non Futurist works, Alfred Casella's quirky brional pieces for piano duet, *Pupazzetti* (from a 1922 piano roll), originally composed in this form in 1915 and adopted in a different version for one section of a 1918 Futurist performance, and an original recording of a jazzy, sometimes palm court, *Futura Caprice* by two Americans, violinist Matty Malneck and pianist Frank Signorelli.

The informative booklet text by James Hayward is somewhat let down by careless editing and factual errors; for example, Russolo's 1914 London performances took place at the Coliseum, not "Colosseum". Additionally, in spite of the album's subtitle (which refers to "Original Recordings By Marinetti/Russolo/Pratella"), no original recording by Pratella as included. Listeners should ignore the 34 items listed on the back cover of the jewel case and instead refer to the 23 tracks in the booklet.

Hayward also fails to provide a clear description of how the intonarumori functioned. Fortunately, he does

## Tokyo's Off Site crew crank up Luigi Russolo's intonarumori, prompting Hugh Davies to reassess the legacy of Italian Futurism

quote Russolo's description of the special feature introduced in his first noise intoner: "It was necessary... that the noise intoner be as simple as possible... single stretched diaphragm... gives, when its tension is varied, a scale of more than ten tones." How was it activated? A single string attached to the centre of the drumskin-like diaphragm was "bowed" by a rosined or fine-toothed wheel rotated by a crank handle (as in a hurdy-gurdy); a pitch lever simultaneously varied the string tension and its length by moving a bridge along it. A motor was used for additional effects in only a couple of instruments.

Having known the sound of the reconstructed intonarumori for more than 20 years, it has been an ear opener to listen to a complete CD of recently composed works for them. In 1986 students at Tama Art University in Tokyo, under the direction of the 20th century specialist Kuniharu Akiyama, built reconstructions of at least eight intonarumori. In February 2002 a concert was presented at the Tama Art University Museum, for which six new pieces were composed and performed on six of the reconstructions by Tetsuji Akiyama and Otomo Yoshihide plus Sachiko M., Toshimaru Nakamura, Toku Sugimoto, and Atsuhiko Ito, a visual artist increasingly involved in music.

Each work nicely illustrates its composer's individual approach. Akiyama, Ito and Yoshihide robustly explore wide ranges of sonic possibilities with the full ensemble. Nakamura uses only one instrument, often reduced to individual clicks and long silences. Sugimoto's restrained looped textures involve three, while Sachiko M. performs a delicate solo with all six noise intoners. The sounds are familiar from the recordings mentioned earlier, but updated with a contemporary aesthetic. A novel addition to the basic performance technique is substantial variation in the speed at which the crank handle is rotated.

Apart from its contribution to recordings of Japanese experimental music, Intonarumori Orchestra represents a major addition to Russolo's soundworld, with the reconstructions put through their paces by a distinguished team □ Hugh Davies is the author of *Sounds Heard (Soundworld)*

Amika Trust stuck close to the Digital Hardcore playbook they had mastered in their previous groups (D'One in EDOR, Trust in Shazoo). Pummeling the listener with a barrage of cut-up soundbytes and riffs, Cobro Killer played on texture rather than structure. A 2002 release on the Australian label Verve, *The Third Armist*, indicated a slight change of direction, but it's become so rare that for all intents and purposes '96/97 is the duo's real coming-out party, a glossed-up album complete with melodies that actually are recognizable and discernible beats.

In six years, D'One and Trust have come to the conclusion that meshing with your listeners' heads can take many forms. Linking 80s girl group singalongs with fourth-generation Berlin electronics (those in need of Techno cred reassurance should note that Thomas Fehlmann and T Raumschmiere supplied production assistance), '96/97 never stays home; accessibility still also integrates little tricks in almost every song. Check the way Eric Clark's goast vocals on "Like It When It Burns A Bit" are off — sometimes slurred, sometimes on the verge of grittier systems. Or the way "Needle Is String" suddenly gives way to a male voice singing, in a mock disco gospel tone, "Sorry, sorry, baby/kid, the sun is burn...," before being abruptly cut off.

The effect is even better live. You can literally feel the seated audience's bewilderment during one of Cobro Killer's unhinged, theatrical sets, documented elsewhere on the live DVD *Monsieur Rhythmic/Alcibiades*. Sound is reduced to the triggering of a sampler, the better to let Trust and D'One loose on the stage — and the crowd on each other. Wine is messily spilled, grand declarations are made, chaotic threats to erupt — but the women keep everything under control. The line between artful and artless has rarely been more blurred. Perhaps Cobro Killer haven't changed that much since 1998 after all.

## CONVOLUTION ROUGH CUTS BROOKY SOUND CD BY TOM PERCHARD

**Convolution** is the Barcelona duo of Mark Cunningham and Silvia Mestres. Cunningham is a veteran of New York No Wave's War and Don King, and here he plays trumpet and electronics. Meanwhile Mestres sings and plays guitar and samplers. Mestres is primarily a visual artist, and her backdrops and lighting are often at the centre of the duo's live act. Deprived of this element on record, Cunningham's music can be strangely

monochromatic, largely based on stark percussion loops and forlorn trumpet swells in grey echo.

On his recent *Spooky Sound* release with Danish born Barcelonan Jakob Dannerup Heygaard, Cunningham used his comet and electronics to create a gentle gamelan of isolated, treated and repeated sounds. Rough Cuts finds him in more expansive moods, his alternating of long vocal lines with flurries and zweireiter noise recording Bill Oberlin's playing. While he might covet when using the bass as a sound source — as he does here on "Radio Sender" — he lacks the ideas, rhythmic acuity and sound to make more style-based pieces work. On "Alarma," Cunningham solos over looped shof drums, melody but aimlessly, and with a tone that's too opaque. It's clapped and creamy without being rich. He does the same on "Festivals Al Raval," a New Wave mini-tutorial which jumps into Ambient sounds from Barcelona's streets over a swelling weight bass.

On the recording at least, Cunningham's electronic treatment of his trumpet lines is largely ornamental. But the samples with which Mestres underpins most of the duos's tracks are more interesting. "Hi De Se Joas" intercuts shards of field recorded fireworks and snatches of bass with some conspiracy and energy, another track, with a lyric based on Wu Ch'ing-lin's 16th-century Monkey epic, has snatches of the piano music of the late Spanish composer Frederic Mompou slowly circling each other. Closing this short album, "15/2/2003" commemorates the anti-war marches that happened worldwide that day. A low and gloomy orchestral section of bass and winds sits without ease under a distorted and compressed sample of marchers' rhythm.

## COOPER-MOORE & ASSIF TSAHAR AMERICA NORDICRON CD

**COOPER-MOORE /  
TOM ABS/CHAD TAYLOR**  
TRIPTYCH MYTH  
NORDICRON CD  
BY PHIL CLARK

NYC pianist Cooper-Moore is a rough diamond. With a style pitched somewhere between Monk, Cecil Taylor, Don Pullen and the knowing nosewiving of Albert Ayler's octetine accompanist Cell Cobey, he's a tactic worth exploring. America follows the tradition of Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" or Sonny Rollins' "Freedom Suite," mining protest with a call for justice.

"America, do you think about the lives you have saved?/America, we're gonna burn your house around/America, we've gonna put you on the homeward bound train," Cooper-Moore laments as he plucks out a catchily riff on what sounds like a tenor piano. The song is a potent and affecting, and Asell Teator's wailing tenor saxophone gives his performance added gravitas. This holistic counterpart between Americanism and improvised commentary is developed further on "12th Avenue Messengers," which posits soon on minimalist triumphalism using Toshio's weeping horn knock against bombastic snare and cymbals, and the touching "Lament For Toes," a sparse introlude yearning for lost innocence.

In its scope and ambition, *Triptych Myth* is set up as a conventional piano/bass/drums date. Apart from a brief solo on an unidentified homemade instrument, Cooper-Moore restricts himself to piano. His playing embraces the full spectrum between clear thicks harmony and hammered clusters, and his solos move forward in stunning paragraphs and abrupt non sequiturs. The bop-like flow of "Stem Cell" is soon snicked away with hints of spinnings, noise and incongruous left hand patterns hinting at boogie-woogie. But at the sly, chromatically twisting "The Fox," Cooper-Moore moves from maximalist blocks of sound to minimalist making every deadpon note count. The deliberately out-of-tune piano and its deliberate awkwardness give the music a childlike quality, a mood that's developed further in Tom Abs's bass feature "Raining Knox." Drummer Chad Taylor has a superb solo on "Harass," and throughout he avoids easily digestible swing. It's an abstract sound picture of our uneasy times.

## PHIL DADSON SOUND TRACKS ATOLL CD BY BRIAN MARLEY

In 1999, while living in London, Phil Dadson participated in Cornelius Cardew's hugely influential Scratch Orchestra. On returning to New Zealand he maintained contact with Cardew and founded an ensemble with similar concerns, Scratch Orchestra (SO). A smaller group, From Scratch, came about in 1997 as Dadson began to explore the formal and structural potential of rhythm. That was when, as much for sculptural reasons as musical ones, he began to construct his own instruments, which signified a gradual shift from improvisation to composition and from randomly tuned instruments to concert (and

microtonal) tunings. For three decades, From Scratch have been in the vanguard of New Zealand musical experimentation. They've issued about a dozen LPs, CDs and videos — most recently *Global Hobo: Live in Europe* (1999) — and their music has been performed in Australia, mainland Europe and North America. What distinguishes *Sound Tracks* from CDs by From Scratch is that here, for the first time, Dadson presents several instruments (either then or now) in concert. Since 2000 he's been active on the reconstituted Auckland Improv scene, and new playing techniques have been developed to fit these circumstances. What's immediately apparent from *Sound Tracks* is the imagination and discipline in Dadson's playing. Even "Gloop," the shortest track, lasting a mere 12 seconds, conjures in its light, stylized gestures an entire music — and an entirely coarsening one. The instrument he plays is the glockenspiel, a single string and drum-membrane resonator.

More elaborate is the zithrum (a zither/cricket machine) which has a major role on "In A Circular Mirror," recorded live in Sydney in 2003. On that track Dadson also plays conga-like, LP, marimba and castanets. The medium (named for California instrument maker Tom Nunn), a drum chamber with metal rods that can be bowed or struck, is heard to best advantage on "Obliquely." Here as elsewhere there's a hint of Henry Purcell's tunings and the American gemmals of Lou Harrison and his partner Bill Colvin. Harrison was so impressed by the sound of Dadson's instruments he named a star in the Eridanus constellation after him.)

But on the most affecting track, Dadson returns to the proto-instrument voice. "Ediglo" is composed of overtone singing and wordless elaborations, layered in stages by the use of a looping pedal. It's a flowing piece, full of shifting undulations and rhythmic underswings, the kind of thing that a self-taught performer might stretch across an entire evening. Imaging over the nuances of one phrase after another, Dadson is considerably more economical, and he treats the piece exactly to end it when he simply clicks off the layers in quick succession.

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The Marble Bar EP and unreleased material comes direct to us from 1984, still smoldering with dry ice. In '84 after his earlier shimmering surprise hit with 'The Crimson Sleeps Tonight' and the chiller Europhile tones of his subsequent project *Ice Yard*, Sturli Argbright entered into a satisfyingly alienating engagement with Hip-Hop. Abandon is the wordword with Argbright, who, though born white in Washington DC, seems to have stuck for a "Japan or the moon".

"America", used by Ric Ross on the soundtrack for *Insignificance*, makes the break from Day's DMX's "One For The Teacher", giving trowel-block floor upon trowel-block floor of random clang, backward springing vinyl flings and scratches of B more disfigure, causing the ear to hurtle past each layer of molten plastic as though it was an out of control elevator. De "Alasped", the groove picks up momentarily only to give way to five dub passages reminiscent of Mark Sowden And The Maff's *Learning To Cope With Consciousness*. Argbright was in thrill to Hip-Hop, in love with Marley Marla's meadow bass drum jazzerazz, Bambata's jazz creaksader finger, GLOBE & Jimi Hendrix, and Steeplechase's mag of vocal colleges. Except this was the Hip-Hop, a park rock rag of its own. Hence *Rebamboos* on "Interior Street" and "Exterior Street" laying down some convoluted klonkastic lines as on no We've Heard masterpiece "The Lecture". Argbright's longtime colleague and partner in Gothic Fatman, Remini, is on famous form. Plenty of feel here for the hoity-toity, as on the nimble electro flow of "Tinley Dream Dre" (obert slightly mangled by the "push button repeat" vocal filos) and the chaotic ambiences of "America 2" and "Scratching Guineas". In fact at its best, as on the six tracks recorded from a live show of DCDS's early incarnation *AnnenSeDeth Star Crew*, The Is Rypop easily results the emotionally bracing textures of Scott Walker's *Tilt*.

**DIPOLE**  
**FLORIDA**  
**BIG DADA CD**

BY TOM PERCHARD

A southerner up north, Diplo made a name for himself tilting boisterous music on his *Hemispheric* mixtapes and party tours. The sound of the South is drash, lunk, or both, music that reels and/or a two decade electro hangover nothing like Diplo's new hipster audiences know. And they love the idea of the American South, what with all the talk of cedars, swamps and Faulkner that surrounds *Florida*, Diplo's first album. Maybe the record was made to sound Country. But more likely it was designed in defiance of the North Philadelphia neighborhood the producer finds himself living in nowadays. There's none of the antsy hyperawareness that gives city life and music, just slengy innuendo or matedace jumping around. And Philadelphians don't try that at home.

The album (whose working title was *Stories From Florida*) unfolds with some cinematic scope, even apart from the endemic soundtrack semantics that make instrumental Hip Hop the realm of Cuban Massimo, music to do something else to. The first 20 minutes aren't a million light years away from the work of Diplo's former collaborator JUDD, but the Florida's range is greater. When Marika Teplay-Bird turns up amid an upstate drowsie familiar from Teplay's first record

and her own, the disengagement begins to get more human, technological alienation turning into bodily weepiness. The music gets lower and faster, and Marika comes into view with the sassy attack and boom of an BOB. But this isn't just a revisiting of Marisa Beretta or dirty Smith styles – the touch of glamour is somewhat out of place, as if Luis Skyscraper had produced Soft Cell. Guests wouldn't crowd the disco second half. Santa Molody does *darkchild* on a guitar electropop track that sounds like DAT Police with an Allegro Avi scowl, and Yves Carat problems his low contemptuous like antman. Sadly his charisma isn't nearly as catching. A minute later, *Frosty People's* PEACE dashes in at a lick to rap play/ Himalaya rhymes almost as old as his vibes vibrato.

**MICHEL DONEDA/JACK WRIGHT/TATSUYA NAKATANI FROM BETWEEN SOS EDITIONS CD BY DAN WARBURTON**

Many practitioners of lowercase improv nowadays sound like they're going through the motions. Showpoets and transpoets sit, debate, gape and drool, guitars and percussivists search their pristine instruments as if they were pupiles, and laptoppers sit statue-like behind their turntables. Apples fizzing like soluble aspirins. But albums like this show that lowercase definitely need not mean "lacking in intensity and commitment".

Saxophonist Doneda and Wright have been active on either side of the Atlantic for going on 25 years, and each has recently contributed landmark documents to the solo sax repertoire – Doneda's *Anarcole Des Clefs* on Polystick and Soprano/Radio on Fingers, Wright's *Pieces To Go* on Spring Garden Music – but the eventual collaboration that happened on Doneda's recent US tour turns out to be even better. Both are sufficiently inquisitive (and stubborn) not to rest on their laurels.

On from between they joined by percussionist Tatsuya Nakatsu, who studiously avoids standard little 'n' clutter in favor of more isolated and sustained sonorities, imbuing the spacious swooping trials with the feel of Japanese court music. No coincidence perhaps that Doneda's mated mate and Nakatsu's beweld bowed sound resemble like the size, or Japanese mouth organ. "Words behind hands" and "of pipes and rods" are studio recordings from May this year, while "...open this surface to clouds" was recorded live at Brooklyn's BPM Gallery nine months earlier. As deceptively simple, direct and moving as the music is the Jerome Rothenberg poem, "The Groves", accompanying my album, from which the title of the closing track is extracted. Recorded by SOS editions' embossed, scarcely loghted track listing, its aura of mystery is well in keeping with the label's mission statement: substance over surface – inscribed by visionaries without dimensional boundaries.

**AUGUST ENGKILDE PRESENTS ELECTRONIC PANORAMA ORCHESTRA POPSCAPE CD BY KORNEL NOLTE**

Copenhagen multi-instrumentalist Engkilde is a regular collaborator with Sten Berke aka Pøle

and a fixture in the live line-up of Uwe Schmidt's Señor Cocoon. EPO offer a similar mixture of airy, inventive electronics, lush, evocative melodies and a slush of tone playfulness. He is extremely well served here by a pool of collaborators weaving instrumental colour in between the smoothly hissing electronics.

There are many pleasant places over the album's ten well-constructed tracks. Engkilde's braids and stings in *Reindeer* have provided him with a genuine understanding of Cuban rhythmic motifs, which recur throughout in fine style. Endo Asmussen's vocals, pitched somewhere between Beth Gibbons and Solis, are immediately arresting on the opening "Little Mary And Old George", though the two uniqueness of some of his lyrics goes somewhat. The strongest element are the instrumental passages.

Engkilde's bass on "I Do" has his slides sliding in the upper register like prene Danny Thompson, while Fredrik Lundin provides soft, sleepy bass flute and contrasting Wayne Shorter-like soprano sax on "Continental Travelling".

Mostly, however, the album fails to suggest or induce much more than a kind of benign tapor.

Surely Engkilde has ambitions beyond creating silky pop just with enough of the burr of grizzly modernism to hint at something deeper? It may seem churlish to fault such immediately concerned work, but the suspicion lingers that Engkilde has spent too long buffing up the gleaming surfaces of his music at the expense of the immediacy that he and his musicians are eminently capable of providing.

**MORTON FELDMAN TRIADIC MEMORIES MODE 2000 DVD BY BRIAN MARLEY**

Posting the material is one of the major problems a pianist has to face when tackling Morton Feldman's late compositions. A further complication arises with *Triadic Memories* (1983), in that a specific tempo isn't indicated. If the pianist tries too swifly through the material, the decay of the note (its "exquisite disappearance", as Martin Nansen refers to it in her sleeveleaf) may not receive sufficient emphasis. Too slow a pace can easily result in lugubriousness. The music should feel airy and convey the sense of receding from rather than moving towards the listener. If tempo is judged well, time seems simply to dissolve.

Having performed the piece at slightly different tempos for a number of years and carefully considered the results, for this recording Nansen has opted for a "steady eighth-note pulse that approximates the beatroot at rest", the degree of expressiveness she brings to *Triadic Memories* thusly kept to a minimum. In this regard she's nearer to Al Tishman than to Roger Woodward. Of course, the playing has to be tailored to some degree to the piano on which the music will be played, and the room in which it will be heard. The Steinway here was chosen by Nansen because of its depth of sound and "rich, soulful timbre", and she describes how the wood-grained *Feodora Great Hall* at the University of Illinois casts the sounds "in a golden light". This is, without a doubt, the most beautiful sounding *Triadic Memories* I've heard.

Nansen's 93 minute performance is broken onto two CDs. It's also available on a single DVD, which allows the music to be experienced

seamlessly. While the piece is playing, the DVD's only visual component is a patterned rug on which the menu is presented. But the DVD also contains a 20 minute interview with Kornion in which she sits at the piano, discusses Feldman and illustrates her comments with brief snippets of his music. What she says is illuminating, especially about the phantom traits in Trädic Monuments and how, in an extraordinary instance, they emerge from the music as it decays.

## FRIPP & ENO THE EQUATORIAL STARS

DISCRIMINE GLOBAL MOBILE CD

BY RYD Young

Two cups of tea, two pieces of cake. The photo on the inner booklet of this aptly spaced-out by Ambient's genious tells continues a long line of very English suburbia when it comes to depictions of space, from the cheery *Bernard Cribbins/Ron Moody Aladdin space programme* comedy *Moule On The Moon* to the swoopy pen whistles and guitarized electronics of the *Gingers* soundtrack, to the凭着ing team that recently snatched the Beagle landing on Mars a frozen strawberry ice cream for Fripp & Eno's latest galactic odyssey: the preferred nutrients are a nice cup of Earl Grey and a slice of Tayta's jam sponge.

But if Saling comedy has been the subject of one of this year's most unlikely Hollywood remakes, these two ladiesliders have kept to the letter of their celebrated brand originals, patented in the mid-70s. *The Equatorial Stars* is in a long tradition of astral travelling gaudies, from the emery paper sousing of *Evening Star*, to Jimi's seminal *Apollo Atmospheres And Soundtracks*. No *Tronopreneur*'s here, Fripp dials down the thick attack in favour of notes spun in eccentric little orbits, while Eno tricks out the houses with watery abstractions of droning, ambience and, on "Atari", some chaffing exploratory rhythmnosis. Soundtracking stellar doves has become one of electronic's most overwrought clichés, but in the easy intimacy audible in this encounter, these Antivariat vets make it sound like a piece of cake.

## BC GILBERT ORDIER

TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS CD  
BY NICK SOUTHGATE

Ordier originated as a live recording from the 1998 Table Of The Elements Yttrium festival in Chicago. The tapes were subsequently thought lost, but now have emerged as a CD squarely presented in its own wooden packing case. This made of industrial-style containment belies an uncompromising and abrasive recording (as does the elemental catalogue number 35). Barium, the element that derives its name from the Greek word for strength).

In 1996 Bruce Gilbert was possessing his QJ Becklesper persona, erupting his sonic assault from the confines of a shod in various dense venues and events, including regular slots at Paul Smith's Discoboy club night. It was this act that inspired the invitation to Yttrium.

The musical content emanates from the same steely epicentre from which the brassy of Mute albums *Ab Ovo* and *In Esse* shouldered forth around the same time. Gilbert adheres to an unswerving electronic minimalism generated

with guitar pedals "pushed to the absolute limit". Ordier is broken into two sections, the first sinking into the pulse of a nightmarish regression to the womb before part two rises with oppressive buzzsaw dinnece against which accusing and unforgiving tones pitch and jaw. "Reaction Times" is a bruising sequence of extended glitches. "Message Received" has the passivity of radio interference that may yet contain a dangerous signal scrambled and lost in the broken transmission. The sounds feel like the electronic impulses of a hulking and ice machine, something shattered and robotic rendered pathetic and antropomorphic by short circuit corrosion and neglect. These noises would be organic in a parlour world where the basis of life was fundamentally and primordially different. Ordier is Bruce Gilbert's report back from his voyages in this different world.

## GRATEFUL DEAD ROCKIN' THE RHEIN WITH THE GRATEFUL DEAD

GRATEFUL DEAD AXXCD

### DICK'S PICKS 30

GRATEFUL DEAD AXXCD

### DICK'S PICKS 31

GRATEFUL DEAD AXXCD

### THE CLOSING OF WINTERLAND

GRATEFUL DEAD AXXCD

BY EDWARD POUNCEY

The didge of Grateful Dead concert recordings continues with the release of four massive box sets in almost as many months. Recorded in April 1972 during their two month tour of Europe, their performance at Dusseldorf's Rheinhalle is emblematic in its portmanteau of how they were able to keep an audience enthralled during this key period of their career. With drummer Mickey Hart temporarily out of the picture, and organist Ron "Piggy" McKernan causing concern due to his failing health, The Dead confronted their European fans in a somewhat depleted state. They made up for this, however, with a show that returned them to their rock 'n' roll roots, containing beefy workouts of "I Know You Rider", "I'm On Your Love Light" and "Beat! It Down The Line" that ride high over such BD standards as "Truckin'", "Playing In The Band" and "Casey Jones". It isn't until the final disc of this triple CD set, though, that they really take off with a writing "Dark Star" improvisation that rises like a plume of black incense out of Jerry Garcia's guitar to twist and curl in the air before metamorphosing into the opening bars of "Weird World". The resulting hallucination of re-entry from deep space into Weir's Wild West adventure works beautifully, and seguing back into "Dark Star" from a completely different angle, the effect of being caught within two worlds is further enhanced. Elsewhere, despite his illness – he would die from liver failure a year later – Piggy turns in some powerful performances, including a full throttle blues vocal on "My Darling".

Just before their European tour, The Dead played the two days at New York's Academy Of Music archived on *Dicks Pick 30*. The first disc is of particular interest in that it teams them with blues/rock 'n' roll veterans Big Brother and the Holding Company, who come together to comprise a raw and untended celebration of rock at its most primal, with

Diddley's energised, howling vocal soaring over The Dead's ecstatic accompaniment, which harks back to their early Warlocks period. Further on down the timeline, the three Dead shows in Philadelphia and New Jersey in August 74, as documented on *DP31*, may not have been blessed with any special guest appearances, but what they pulled out of their collective instrumentarium more than makes up for it. Here the Dead are as transcendental rockers, especially on Garcia's extended "Eyes Of The World" – a headswimming highlight as it crashes into an even longer rendition of "Playing In The Band". The effect is akin to witnessing two marmots exploding as they hit each other, an impact that sends the group whirling into a complex improvisation.

All of which makes *The Dead's star-studded All New Year's Eve 1978* gig to celebrate the closing of concert promoter Bill Graham's Westend venue in San Francisco sound somewhat tame by comparison. The set contains a perhaps too broad spectrum of their material, but nothing really takes off and the omnipresent feeling that Graham was the right's centre of attention here rather than The Dead's music is hard to shrug off. Despite its historical importance, perhaps this is one Grateful Dead recording that should have stayed in the can.

## GROUNDTRUTHER

LATITUDE

THIRSTY BAR CD

BY BRAM MORITZ

Groundtruther is essentially a duo involving drummer Bobby Previte and guitarist Charlie Hunter, who thus far is better known for his slightly gimmersky Blue Note albums and his use of an eight-string guitar, which allows him to be his own bass man. He's done the guitar/drums thing before, with Leon Parker on 1999's *Duo*, but given the range of his own bottom strings, it was effectively a trio record. Among the other Blue Notes were a track by track knock-off of the Waller's *Madame Dread*, and Songs From The Analog Playground, a run-through of favourite rock and soul numbers to which Hunter added guest vocals by Kurt Elling, Norah Jones and Mos Def.

Nothing, in other words, that would prepare you for the sheer clangor and abstraction of Hunter's opening on "North Pole". Well named, it's a chily singularity of a piece, big slabs of sound, no latitude to speak of. The tracks then follow the predictable sequence down: "Arctic Circle", "40th Parallel", "House Latitudes North" (so what if Leon Nonesense does, mercifully, "Topic Of Cancer", "Ecuador", and then on to the other Pole. The opening track apart, it's not always clear how the individual performances relate to their geographic positions "Arctic Circle", with guest saxophone from Greg Dyer, has a funky train beat that might seem more appropriate to "40th Parallel", but since it's a slice of Finest-Bah Americanica, maybe not.

As ever, Previte has the ability to invest a simple machine beat with enormous character and panache, slipping the matre, adding and subtracting beats in a way that keeps the music from becoming too austere. Dyer returns with ones and twos on "Topic Of Cancer", apparently sampled and mixed well back. Hunter carries most of the weight and does so as comfortably.

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## MATS GUSTAFSSON/ SONIC YOUTH & FRIENDS HIDROS 3 SMALLTOWN SUPERBOUND CD

BY WILL MONTGOMERY

A deep-lasting mode player of immense speed and force, Sweden's Mats Gustafsson is a key figure in Scandinavian improvisation. He's also had a long association with the Chicago Old Oak jazz, playing with saxophonist Peter Brötzmann (an early influence) and drummer Amund Orke, and he's worked with ex-Gastr Del Sol luminaries Gun Grubbs and Jim O'Rourke. O'Rourke was thelynchpin of the performance of this long Gustafsson composition, recorded at a Sonic Youth-curated festival at Ystad in southern Sweden in 2000. It's an ensemble piece (part of a series of *Hidros* compositions), dedicated to Paul Smith and inspired by O'Rourke. It's not, however, an "ensemble" affair as we know it. There are five guitarists: Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo, Steve Shelley from SV along with Loren Connors and Swedish guitarist David Stephensen. Then there's Latifa Meiri, a dancer equipped with a light-sensitive "auditorium." For the performance, each sits in separate cabinets with a clock and a copy of Gustafsson's graphic score. The soloists were mixed in an adjacent hall by O'Rourke. Three soloists — Kim Gordon (vocals), Linda Kellerman (treated voice) and Gustafsson (contra bassoon/contre axophone) — performed against the extraordinary results. This album, though, isn't O'Rourke's live mix. It's a version that Gustafsson and friends assembled from the performance recordings over six months last winter. And further mass are on the horizon: a completely different vinyl version from O'Rourke will be the next to be released.

This version is a great whirling beast of a recording, resulting all kinds of experimental feedback. In the background is the lumber ruckus of Orenji Coleman's double quartet Free Jazz, but there's also the swagging energy of Machine Gun-era Brötzmann, and the quiver, creeping benthic moves of early Spontaneous Music Ensemble. It's a demanding listen — the musical set-up specified by Gustafsson makes sure of that. First there's the semi-randomness of six people parsing graphic scores in isolation. Then there's the strikingly original version of the soloist/ensemble relationship, with Gustafsson's massive saxophone, Gordon's tinged-nerve toots and Kellerman's indescribable sounds following their own distinct paths alongside the ensemble.

The piece is a teasing exploration of the nature of individual and group musical creativity, disrupting the usual relationship between the two. The wiffling solo trajectories pursued by the players are knitted together at the mixing stage into a tangled and dissonant web of twangs, vocal yelps, electronics and saxophones. In his mix, Gustafsson achieves something like bathed vinyl crochet. Sounds drip in and out and unexpected dents and thuds suddenly surge to the fore. Sometimes the music is sparse and sometimes exploding masses of sound have suddenly rise perspective (like cloud formations in time-lapse weather films). Melodic J hangs somewhere between the worlds of improvisation, out rock and what Thurston Moore calls "free jazz underground". It's a blast.

## KING MISSILE III ROYAL LUNCH IMPORTANT CD

BY MIKE BARONE

As Linda Ronstadt was recently honored from Alejo's Hotel, Las Vegas, for publicly endorsing Michael Moore's film Fahrenheit 9/11 onstage, one can only wonder what reaction King Missile III's savage "America Rocks Asia" would have provoked. He last taunts with King Missiles' games some years ago, but current events in global powerplay have obviously galvanized them into making statements of brutal clarity. Amazingly, vocalist and polemicist John S Hall is also a practicing attorney advising clients in all fields of creative activity. In the pick of these semi-spoken performances to musical booking, he is very amusing, and best of all, at his angriest. Although his delivery rarely rises above the decibel, "Another Political Poem" is an eyebrow-raising Harry of hatred against senior American political figures. A victim of torture and slow painful death, it comes the denouement, "I would die the slowest, most painful death of all if I meant that half of you would die now."

"Suggested Response To The Coming Cases" describes a world on the edge of apocalypse, which flies into an enthusiastic explication of sexual activity, a 21st century twisting of the White Panthers' rallying cry of "Revolution, dope, guns and fucking in the streets!" This scenario finds men on the awaiting end of women with strap-ons. In Hall exhausts all to "Yuck for God." Meanwhile, "The Clowns" finds him staring into a spiritual void: "There is almost nothing worse in the world than to have a brief glimpse — of clarity of the Absurd, of All and Everything — and to realize that is as close as you will ever get, because you have not been chosen."

Sometimes he loses focus, as on the essentially scatological "Get Down With The Jimmy Shift." This is followed by the limp James Brown pastiche, "Get Into It," while "Brain Explode" sounds like he's trying to be the nadir kid in the class. The funniest part of the entire CO is the opening "Meditation Is Booring." "Boooga?" Why does meditation have to be so boring?" asks Hall to a "Doin'min' charme Royal Lunch starts out at a state well short of Nirvana, and it's all downhill from there,

## SACHIKO M/ TOSHIKURO NAKAMURA/ OTOMO YOSHIMIDE GOOD MORNING GOOD NIGHT ENSEMBLE CD

BY ALAN CUNNING

In a thoughtful essay on musical listening in his *Jammin' man* modal magaine earlier this year, Otomo Yoshihide attempted to pin down a definition of the slippery electroacoustic improvisation scene with which he is so strongly associated. Perspectively, he pointed out that much of this so-called "only" music may have mystique. Historically dominant structural elements such as melody, chords or rhythm, had merely replaced them with a concentration on subtle variations on tonal colors. Otomo then goes on to try and draw a line between this approach and what he sees as the distinctly different methodologies of Taka Sugimoto, Sachiko M and Ami Yoshiida. He declares that their music

abandons even tonal color, and that what makes it distinctive is in fact its lack of discernible or meaningful structure.

The implications of this approach are made most blantly apparent across the 140 minutes of *Good Morning Good Night*, which is undoubtedly the first trio recording by Otomo, Sachiko M and Toshihiko Nakamura. Even listeners well attuned to the subtleties of European avant-garde improvisation are liable to be brutally challenged, even baffled by this music. The austerity of a poem is a given with these players, and the sounds deployed on this record are once again the familiar empty sampler, no-input mixing board and record-less turntable. But just as palates long accustomed to greener flavors can slowly learn to appreciate the fine distinctions of fresh fruit and bold red soil, so too have our ears learnt to find beauty in the spartan simplicity of a sawtooth, the crackle of needle on turntable interacting with a distant ambulance siren.

What shocks infinitely more than this music's asceticism, however, is the relationship between the players and its effect on the development of the music, or more precisely its lack of development. Time is of course a structural constant in any performance, and the titles of the four tracks add a link to this with their deliberate, chronological mention of morning, afternoon, evening and night. But without a language to be decoded, patterns to be identified across time, can we even recognize this as music? So accustomed are we to thinking of improvised music in terms of linguistics — of discovering a common language, of dialogue, exchanges and conversation — that the absence of such strategies can leave us floundering in a quagmire of silence and random noise, click and crackle.

Fortunately, the press release throws the critic a safety rope, in its lauding reference to the musicians' attempt to discover a "vertical music" (one is reminded of Tora Takemoto's characterization of traditional Japanese music as vertical, as opposed to the linear development of Western music). Without horizontal narrative development, the ears are left to find aural pleasure in moment by moment textual changes, the scalpel-sharp placement of sounds. Whether you find such sounds pleasurable or even musical is entirely your own choice — and it is here that Otomo's argument becomes most interesting. Previous improvisation provided an answer to the question "is this music?" in its performance, in the recognition of developing language and conversation, in its technique and virtuosity. But *Good Morning Good Night* refuses to provide this patterning, this awareness of latent structures and communication. The question gets thrown back right at the listener — what do you think music is?

## MAGYAR POSSE KINGS OF TIME VERDURA CD

BY JIM HAYNES

This second album by Finland's Magyar Posse is a quintessential manifestation of the imaginary soundtrack. Glorious comparisons exist with Godspeed You! Black Emperor and the rest of the Constellation collective, but Magyar Posse give much more credence to the ability of the soundtrack to communicate, steering clear of the

political agendas that run the risk of scuttling the Constellation aesthetic. As with Godspeed, Ennio Morricone is the grandfather to Magyar Posse's sound. Yet throughout Kings Of Time, you're aware of Orno Argento's Goblin flickering in the shadows.

It begins with a mournful duet between acoustic guitar and violin before a detached female voice enters, uttering woeless melodies. This works as a minor key counterpart to the energetic leitmotif and huge crescendos that dominate the album. Magyar Posse's intense orchestrations for sprawling guitars, church bell crashes, thunderous percussions and violin lifts embrace similar strategies to Godspeed's *Film*, yet the Finn's novel addition of an antigen virus vibraphone and the aforementioned female vocals look further back to the Prog regiments of 70s film scores. However, they draw a much greater desire to explore psychologies other than raw pathos, as can be heard on the drift transitions from those epic crescendos down to airy locomotive rhythms and sedative late-life jazz wonderings. Toss Kings Of Time and a couple of decent actors at a script with existential overtones, and you're halfway to a Sundance award.

## METALUX WAITING FOR ARMADILLO

LOAD CD

BY DEREK WILMSLEY

Metalku are previous members of Bathsheba-arted noise makers Bedouin Of No Na. The abrasive toughness of Waiting For Armadillo does not depend upon dramatic, contrapuntal presentation; however – it's rawness strength is built into the very structure of the music. This lo-fi noise excursion ratchets up the intensity through a cumulative, relentless application of sputious textures. Waiting for the next foul synth leap is to make its entrance is like waiting for a lungbound geon to flick the switch that pushes your rollercoaster towards the edge of oblivion.

With a limited palette of cheap sounding guitars and synths, distortion becomes the most important texture on Waiting For Armadillo. Voices are thinned and dispersed, melody overtones are overwhelmed into abrasive resonances. The resulting feel is not of aggression but of alienation, with mirthless vocal lurching on the edge of comprehensionability, inexpressible and omnious. If Sister-era Sonic Youth had plagued synths into their pedals and locked drummer Steve Shelley in a dungeon, the result might have sounded like this.

The grungy rhythmic occasionally recall Replix or Tigris/Orion releases; but this is a twisted trip other than a straightforward technological accomplishment. Metalku's hands on, intuitive noisecraft methodically builds to a rightminded clausrophobia after the darker zones of Aphex Twin's Selected Ambient Works Vol 2. Strong evidence for electronic music being the real instigator of pain, Waiting For Armadillo bleeds from the speakers, as caustic and vicious as mustard gas.

## MOUNT WASHINGTON MOUNT WASHINGTON

REPY CD

BY BEN WATSON

Chris Heenan is an alto saxophonist and bass clarinetist currently establishing himself on the international scene. Luckily, he understands that

the best way forward isn't self-promotion as sax hero, or being in famous rhythm sections for showcase releases, but exposing who else is playing inventively and working with them. He's recorded with percussionist Stephen Finn, who made a soloist with Keep The Meter Running (see The Wire 245), and here shows a lean ear for who's making the running in international Improv. Martin Blum on percussion, Sven Druffl on tom-toms, Wolfgang Fussa on reeds, Anne Leibson on harp, Jostein Müller on piano, Phillip Whisman on violin and electronics. The venue for this one-off encounter was painter Patrick Wilson's sunken living room in Mount Washington. The recording was remixed at Keweenaw Studio by Hennes, Wayne Peet and Jeremy Drake, who played amplified acoustic guitar on the date. The mix is exemplary, honouring the dynamics and relations of the original improvisation, yet masking everything, sparkle in a way room recordings of large ensembles often don't. Müller's bowed bass occasionally slows down the tempo with amazing authority, as if the time-space continuum of the music is being warped in the presence of a black hole. Leibson's harp keeps plilling in extraordinarily detailed motifs. Quackerlike immeasurable splits in every direction, creating delicate webs, web details, creaky textures.

Fans of the splinter and stinkers of 1963 OR Baley versus Bennink might find it all a bit pretty and polite. However, there's no easy remedy for this otherwise less than other genres, free improvisation cannot avoid the general refinement in playing technique that has occurred over the last 50 years. Just as metal alloys have become lighter and more malleable, so musical nodes have become thinner and more flexible, more directed by human will. Attempts to return to the big, bold primordial of pure tend to sound rather mannered, from Wynton Marsalis and Acid Mothers Temple to Old School rip. Although Heenan's crew haven't found the royal road out of the dilemma, they pace the territory with verve and dexterity. Everyone is really paying attention. Except for moments when Whisman's wiles impose an inappropriate idiom (Verreness schmalz), the music is a rare example of an octet improving successfully something new and masked loops unfurling.

## SIMON NABATOV TRIO AUTUMN MUSIC

LOAD CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Russian pianist Simon Nabatov has long had an affinity with the Amsterdam Improv scene. Now, following a duo CD with Han Bennink – Chat Room, also on Leo – this is the third with Ernst Reijerger and drummer Michael Vorster, performing originals and non-standard standards. The rarefied freedom of the first of two parts of Nabatov's "Autumn Music" gives little indication of the predominantly melodic, groove-based material to come – even if the latter is often treated ironically or subverted. On Herbie Nichols' "Lady Sings The Blues", Nabatov's memory is fluent, with funky colloquy by Ernst Reijerger – not a quality often associated with that instrument. But then Reijerger is unusual in many respects, even if his choice of instrument is logical: jazz bassists from Scott LaFaro onwards moved into the higher register with alacrity, so why not play cello instead?

As Nabatov writes in his sleeve-note, the tune of "Handy Obligee", played by piano, is just that – "string them along, not going anywhere... just being there" – while around it a seemingly unconnected banjo is cooked up by cello and drums. I hope the tune won't just be thrown away in this manner; however, as it's certainly pretty enough to go somewhere on another occasion. "The Third Stone" is the early composition by Reijerger, a plaintive theme learnt at first through gain then again subjected to trauma. The album closes with "Vales Da Porto Das Caves", from a soundtrack by Jobim.

Nabatov is a very existing player, yet isn't fully aware what he's about. He studied at the Moscow Conservatory, moving to New York in 1978 and finally Cologne, and much of his originality comes from an ability to mix classical complexity and formidable pianistic virtuosity with improvisational freedom.

## TATSUYA NAKATANI GREEN REPORT 12

HAN PRODUCTIONS CD

## MARY HALVORSON/CLAYTON THOMAS/TATSUYA NAKATANI MAP

HAN PRODUCTIONS CD

BY JULIAN COYLE

Japanese percussionist Tatsuya Nakatani relocated to New York in 1995, since when he has become a significant figure on the city's free improvising scene. Collaborations with violinist Billy Bang and bassist William Parker and Peter Kowald have helped draw attention to his fresh and highly imaginative engagements with sound. Green Report 12, recorded between September 2003 and March 2004 in an industrial basement in South Bronx, is the last of a series of fine expositions of Nakatani's expansive musicality as a sole performer.

The opening piece, "Reincarnation", is a "magical secession from garage and bells", an oddly vacuous prolonged metallic shimmer. Nakatani glosses the substance of the abrasive, doing track as "dangerous mechanical notes". In between, nine further pieces trace aspects of his approach involving statistic placement of discrete sounds in a field of silence, industrial scrapes and clatters, evocative textures, abstraction and colourism, various kinds of bowing and polyrhythmic taps. Nakatani alone often not just instances of investigative playing, but facets of an unorthodox genre.

For the six improvisations on Map, Nakatani is joined by guitarist May Hasekova and double bassist Clayton Thomas. This is tight group playing with a distinctly toothie feel. Halvorson's approach embraces brash stopping effects and slippery sliding massage performed upon the strings of her instrument. There's often a wringing quality to the way she plays, an audible grip. Thomas thrums and bows, foregrounding the friction, savouring the vibration. Nakatani – pommific or luminously howling, cliving hard or obliquely ceremonial – mediates the sound.

## ANTHONY PATERAS/SEAN BAXTER/DAVID BROWN

ATAXIA

SYNASTHESIA CD

BY DAN WARHARD

After last year's Synesthesia release Coagulate with Robin Fox, and several tracks on his Tzadik

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HATHUT 805 - NEW RELEASE



HATHUT 805 - NEW RELEASE



HATHUT 805 - NEW RELEASE



HATHUT 805 - NEW RELEASE



debut Alvinet Theatre, pianist Anthony Putera reveals further evidence of his improvising skills on *Aleks*, more dazzling proof that the New Music scene in Australia – especially Melbourne – is going from strength to strength. His joined by percussionist Sean Baster (Bucketeer, Lazy Western Grey), one of a growing band of hand-on-junk percussionists, and guitarist David Brown, aka Cantharidus, in six exotically colourful tracks ranging from the delicate sonic heft of "Maledict" to stochastic knockout – *Xenakis* would have loved the end of "Stich".

While improvising pianists since Bartók/Geszts have been delving inside the instrument in search of new sonorities, very few have explored the prepared piano with much rigor – John Tilbury being one – but Putera's piano, as the album photography makes abundantly clear, is assailed to the limit with rubber, cardboards, screws, cans and crocodile clips, making him sound like a veritable sea of metamorphs. It's a treat to say that Béla and József are as accessible to Aussies today as Blackpool was to Manchester concert workers 100 years ago.

Should *IMPROVATION* one day go beyond exploring Big Voices, and the indigenous populations of those islands ever move into the Improv, it just might sound something like this: The spiky slurry of New Complexity and exotic percussion clatters bears more relation to Richard Barrett's "Negatives" – recorded, as it happens, in Melbourne some 10 years ago – than it does to any other recent trend in Improv. Coming at this music from directions as diverse as extreme noise meltdown and post-Darmstadt composition, Brown, Putera and Baster have earned up one of the year's quirkiest and tastiest dishes so far.

#### AKIRA RABELAIS SPELLEVAUERYNSHERDE SAMADHI SOUND CD

BY ANNE HILDE NESET

When bassoon alum Rabelais found a handful of discarded Amigos tapes containing Icelandic a cappella recordings – recorded some time between 1960 and 1980 – he decided to bring them back to life using his "magical" code language. Rabelais writes software but likes the process to writing poetry. For him it has the same unpredictable outcome, labyrinthine inventing and constant surprise. He constructed the software Amigophones (yes in the early 90s, a software processor that randomly distorts and transforms pre-existing sounds) it's a fan favorite of the likes of Thom Yorke and Scamper.

The album has the air of an invented mythical past, with lengthy titles that seek like medieval belcanto references – "1483 Codex Golden Leg 20B b2" He put not away the wisdom of his flesh with a shrude or shell; it's about the shortest, Spellenvauerynsherde is the third release on David Sylvian's Samadhi Sound label, and the first without input from Sylvian himself. Graceful, sorrowful hymns are depicted with swathes of haunting, echoing noise, like hearing funeral music carried with the wind through a storm. The subtle digital processing slowly transmutes the choral patches, adding small delays, echoes and loops. He plays the role of a magus using his code as a spell to summon up a somber spirit hidden within these graceful Icelandic elements. This is lonely, spiritual music evoking the solemn atmosphere of Elaine

Rodrigue's *Imagie De La Mort*, the memory music of Philip Jeck and the introverted romance of Sylvain collaborator Ferneze. Rabelais represents an elegant strand of electronics that goes entirely beyond the plug-in craze of his contemporaries – the clicks, cuts & glitch division that ultimately renders so much electronic similar sounding.

Spellevauerynsherde in bathes subtlety through your CD player circuits.

#### RADIAN JUXTAPOSITION THRILL YOUTH CO

BY ROB YOUNG

In Woody Allen's film *Decomposing Harry*, Robin Williams plays an actor who complains of being "a little out of focus"; finally a blur in the frame while his shaggy-adapted hairdo and coo wigg. This came to mind on listening to *JuxtaPosition*, the second album by Vienna's Martin Brandlmayr (drums), Stefan Helmeth (guitar/electronics) and Joni Nemeth (bass).

There's the visual cut on the cover photography which depicts urban rooftops and landscapes (the common ground outside tower blocks, parking lots, culs de sac, etc) with different sections cut out of focus, chickentail swabbed on the skyline. It might also be the literal way the production, largely by Turbine's John McEntire at his Chicago Soma Studios, sweeps across different elements and homes in on elusive instruments at different times like a mist, roving, caravans less.

There is a tenebrae, but purposeful, and it's that quality which makes this a more engaging listen than the equally abstract cybernetic fusion of *Il Recco* (or Magistral), both of which have drifted over the years into mind-sapping isolation. On "Vertigo", the drums have a tango squeakiness that sounds like manchaka bows used as beaters. They can do lugubrious, as on "Hello" and "Nord", which recalls drummer Brandlmayr's other group Tropik, while "Testar" brings Cava Furore Days or Soon Over Asbolane to mind: shiny jet tools of texture, melody as aerosol, drums as gas propellant. Radian is a machine, their music the sum total of body mechanics and lucy logic.

#### MAJA RATKJE & JAAP BLONK

MAJA RATKJE & JAAP BLONK  
KONTAKTCD

#### MAJA SK RATKJE &

LASSE MARHAUG  
MUSIC FOR LOVING  
BOTTRUP-SØY B BOX CD

BY JULIAN COMLEY

Maja Salving Kjellstrøm Ratkje trained in composition at the Norwegian State Academy of Music in Oslo and has subsequently won numerous awards – she was first recipient of the Arne Nordheim prize. Oslo Stringfestival recorded her instrumental "Waves 1b" for their 2000 release *Faces*. Despite such measures of official recognition, Ratkje's creative dialogue is still ongoing with wild things. This has been duly acknowledged through her improvising with the group Spunk and in the inventive and surprising vocal fantasias of her solo set *Love*. And its celebrated to the full on these two duets. Dutch interpreter of sound poetry and vocal

linguist Jaap Blonk is a robust, bodily performer whose utterances always sound enfolded in flesh and muscle. The Kontakt disc comprises 19 solos recorded in Oslo and The Netherlands, and Ratkje's own singing and Blonk's solo voice lead or closely shadow Blonk through thickets of bubble and animal exuberance. In her higher register she sometimes approaches rapid Eelike squeaks, but usually the pair's nonverbal chatter, jargum and scold, punctuated with wheezing, snoring, humming and squirming spits, is a plunge into the fertile reserves of the human body's own sound making capabilities. Crucially, given the voice's potential for unisons, Ratkje and Blonk shape and pose their improvisations with clarity and agility as well as a palpable sense of fun.

Ratkje's electric encounter with expert nosefinger Lasse Marhaug in Oslo studio last November generated a wealth of turbulence, captured live without overdubs on *Music For Loving*. That title raises the prospect of seductive subtleties but the music's rawness is more accurately conveyed by the third track title, "Unfinished: Swept, Stripped And Fleeked". The CD begins with a searing sonic gouge that establishes an outburst of urgent intensity. Ratkje and Marhaug revel in a side of pollutants, crosscurrents of acoustics grit and grime, colliding streams of articulated signs that refuse to signify. Samples proliferate – sheep, Stein Reich, instant leghorn, Heavy Metal, airline announcement, fiddlehead organ, earnest piano – all are盥洗ed, lashed with wild noise. Within the appearance of accident, distinct forms coalesce, compositional spirit asserting itself precociously and ambiguously on the brink of auditory chaos, using voices or electronics, Ratkje holding at the ragged edge of the moment shouldn't be missed.

#### RED POCKET THICK

TAZKOD CD

#### PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER OUT OF THE REEDS

TAZKOD CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

Two albums from Tazid's Radical Jewish Music stand take very different approaches to the radicalism that informs the imprint's aims. Red Pocket's *Thick* is, says its accompanying blurb, a series of songs about "sensitivity and its discontents". While the description warrants some initial suspicion with its sly Freudian allusion (and OK, a song entitled "Mutikka"), Jeniva Eisenberg and Marika Hughes's offering, does little to sustain the interest. If you're hoping for a dry-as-dust PJ Harvey reclamation of female sensitivity, forget it. By the time *Thick* gets to its two thirds of the way through, and so much off-the-wall shtetl filth has passed under the bridge that not even the promise of an explanation of how its singer (or narrator, at least) got as "slitzy" can reform it.

All of which is surprising as singer/bassist Eisenberg and cellist Hughes have a substantial track record as performers in Charming Hostess and elsewhere. Moreover, they're to be applauded in their assertiveness. Too few female performers and writers are prepared to be brash. But while there's a real musical and political dynamism to *Thick*, its fault lies in accompanying virtuosity at the expense of music. Only so many

slipped strings and vocal intervals that descend like a lift in freight can be interesting.

*Out Of The Reeds* covers very different territory. Mixing traditional and unusual themes and motifs with North African instrumentation, one might think this is another diegetic CD. But the range of Phrasen's Deugneur goes further. Guitars, oed player and main composer Yves Schneider ends in Leidu, songs from northern Italy at an altitude of 3,000m and the impassion – especially as ululating voices, cymbalos and clarinet get going – is of a music that extends beyond scenes and historical boundaries. In these times of petty nationalisms and depressing tribalism, that can only be a good thing.

**ROGER REYNOLDS**

## PROCESS AND PASSION

POGUS SKODA  
BY JUWEL CERAMIC

California based composer Roger Reynolds trained in engineering physics as well as music and is a strong minimalist in the spatial distribution of organized sound has drawn repeatedly on specialized awareness of new technological options. The two discs of *Process And Passion* offer three works in duplicate. On the first, there's standard use of the stereophonic field, on the second a binaurally encoded alternative, processed for binaural reproduction.

needless to name other speaker playbooks.  
1992's *Koreko*, taking its name from a Japanese word whose range of meaning encompasses both the physical heart and metaphysical spirit, is a violin solo commissioned by Irene Anttila but performed superbly here by Mark Manus. The piece is filled with furtive delicacy and anxious yearning, tentative musing and fierce eloquence. Focus A, beamed eighth-note thinking, outward-, dedicated to cello virtuoso Heitor De Salas, is a solo rendered here by another accomplished cellist, Hugh Liengemann. It's a measured composition, breathing with subtle regularity and at the same time dynamically alive with changes of mood and character.

Process And Passion (2002) was written for Menzies and Livergoon together, conceived as a drama indebted to Greek tragic poet Aeschylus. It pits the cities' voice of reason against the violin's passionate and ardent nature as they work through computer-assisted negotiation to decide a practice of musical justice. In the course of this dialogue, Reynolds poses considerable technical challenges to Menzies and Livergoon, not least in attending to the finer modulations of its emotional complexion. They respond with appropriate clarity of execution and intensity of feeling.

In the case of each of these three pieces, but most notably in the concluding duet, the binaurally choreographed version discloses a further dimension, sounds dispersed yet enriched in depth and vividness, abetted by an enveloping multi-channel experience. The experimental spirit that reverberated through Reynolds's early compositional output still filters steadily through his accumulated expertise.

programmer and application developer Ryley Frazeecon offers wistful glimpses of life as Earth as seen from some inauspicious vantage point in space. A leisurely cycle of instruments in which electronics are skillfully intertwined with an array of arpeggiated instruments, the entire project has the senselessness feel of a lost broadcast transmission gradually breaking up over the millions of miles that increasingly separate it from its source. The adoptive use of field recordings, derived from Berkeley, Los Angeles, Sambhaji and Sora, give these delicate compositions a genuine and perceptible grain – a sense of experienced moments recalled after the passage of time.

The heavy cracking of ice on "Winter" is neatly cut off by the slamming of a car door, making way for the mummuring rustle of "Spring." Unafraid to augment the gentler possibilities of guitar, bass and drums fit through subtle laptop manipulations, as on "Magma" and "Kid," with more instances of rhythmic progressions. Fossaceca displays a fine feel for structure, particularly during "Bei" and "Fells 2," which allows for the controlled introduction of a greater instrumental palette. Consequently, Lila Síká's thoughtfully understated violin, Josy Hey's cello, plus the occasional contribution from woodwind and brass, maintain an unstated lightness of

Elsewhere, our distant home planet's inhabitants are given intimate vocal expression, thanks to singers Lily Stom and Monia Smiley who lend a mournful clarity to opener "falls 1" and the weightless drifting lines of "Only". Earth has never sounded so far away.

SAM RIVERS/  
ADAM RUDOLPH/  
HARRIS EISENSTADT  
VISTA  
MCA CO

时间: 2010年1月1日-2010年1月31日

#### **Answers from Dr.**

For most of his career as a solo artist he was based at 1930. He's actually much older, and in these recent and percussive tributes to Rudolph and tap-player Eisenstadt, he sounds as old as the very origins of a man's hobby to give five decades. For all his recent activity and a substantial repertory in Europe, Rivers is the forgotten exponent of the New Thing. It's ironic that a player who on his day could be as revelatory as John Coltrane and as ferociously intense as Albert Ayler should remain less well known and respected than the now compromised Archie Shepp and the preposterous Sandra Sanders.

centre for contemporary jazz, but no one expects also a dozen on Rewis's creative repertoire. Much of the early staff has been treated callously by the labels and the earliest thing in the current catalogue that I know of is the Impulse! *Two Live, With European Adrenalin* in 1973, when he was already 50. Fortunately, Rewis has proved that sometimes just *livet* - not necessarily *liveng* *will* - be the best revenge. The honking tenor tones that head off "Philo" are an old albatross's warning cry to young challengers. For sheer form and simplicity of tone, there is no one to equal him. Which is why it's such a devastatingly effective tactic to start off the set with his boozing, almost wacky little sound on "Scamander". He always lets acquire an outfit a

couple of tracks later, and those who've never

heared him before will wonder if it's Wayne Shuster in an 'lost' moment; they're listening to it a ludicrous companion, only because the two men both beat each other but one of them aesthetically successful with it, evolved in parallel and at a distance. Wayne learned no more from Sam than Sam has learned from the younger guys who came after him. It doesn't go back to Sam until the very final, title track, which is a pity, except one suspects that these days the brightness and speed of response he gets from the fans are very welcome. It also gives him that primal sound that sits so well with the admirably effusively percussive of his colleagues.

Stern was actually born in 1923. It's almost embarrassing to say that he's never played better. For one, it's not quite true, even of the work of recent years the Nasu records with Tony Williams are more appealing. It's certainly embarrassing to suggest that if you've never heard him before, or mentally consign him to a 60s dustbin, here and now is a very good place to start. You never know what he might do if he decides he likes this jazz thing and takes it on full time.

KEITH ROWE/  
AXEL DÖRNER/  
FRANZ HAUTZINGER  
A VIEW FROM THE WINDOW

**KEITH ROWE &  
CHRISTIAN FENNESZ  
LIVE AT THE LU**

KEITH ROWE/OREN  
AMBARCHI/ROBBIE AVENAIM  
HONEY PIE  
GROB CD

BY ROB YOUNG  
Production editor: MIM, designer: Edith

卷之三十一

Particulars, can lead to a "rather facile docum-  
edygo", Rod Malfatti, Axel Dommer and co-  
author accuse of "trying to produce...satiric  
moments in pre-packaged bite-sized chunks";  
McMillan will be easily, early release  
discharged without any of the orbit of catharsis.  
However, officials is reserved for Plevé's  
resistive colleague in AMV, Kath Howe, not only  
as she responded as the "Jesus Christ" of  
the Redundant movement but also condemned for  
his alleged lack of interest in listening  
responsively to the activities of fellow musicians.  
Kath's tone on it (as that) dialogue is a bourgeois  
charting, more "western chit". It's official, AMV  
in musical differences somm'.

Perhaps it would be truer to say, given the Shakespearian ministrations of Reductionist series, that Howe represents Luther and Pirozzi is the Counter-Reformation, although that too is misleading, for there is nothing heretical about his own approach, which privileges mutual practice on a human, co-operative scale, focused on the respect that comes from mutual listening. Pirozzi suggests the encroachment of noise for noise's sake as a means of masking the invasion of power economies. Bands across the generic ocean have led to a nefarious technological domination of the stylings that he once inhabited. Electronic enhancements sampling and the intrusion of pure noise form a conspiracy that threatens to wash away Improvisation's mere voice.



# Size Matters

3", 7", 10" and other misshapen formats

Genuinely cracked: Marshall Star



It's a little hard to believe that anyone would be drunk enough to name their child **Marshall Star**, but the world is filled with genius almost beyond comprehension, so what the fuck? Anyway, here we have the second single by Marshall Star, Any Second Now/Dream On (Fury 7"), and in their press kit they claim that the vocalist is named just that. Thankfully, some web research reveals that Star is actually cabaret singer Monty Star, abetted by ex-Athletes Spaz instrumentalist CP. That said, the A-side is a fairly interesting and skuzzy take on self-destructing mesh R&B readymades. What its ultimate point is supposed to be is unclear, but the song is genuinely cracked.

**Assumption Police** On Fire is a pretty good handle for any group. And this particular outfit's single, Hesus in Carcass/23 Jewels ("Inneda 7") is a pretty kick-ass of shaggydog classroom.

"Venus" features fuzz-laden pop dynamism without any sort of overt nod to the temples of commerce that swamped the original score. "23 Jewels" is more like Yo La Tengo's B-side with long-tone organ, scratchy violin and rim-neck percussives adding up to a special kind of slackness. Smooth stuff.

The second single by **Escape Pad**, Winter (Dead Digital 7") is a strangely nice yet leaden effort from a group who describe themselves as "Manchester's first newwsgirls". While it's unclear whether or not that title is apropos, there is little denying that the three songs here have a dark center of gravity and a musical emotion that is clearly unique. Their use of keyboards and other stuff pushes noses and feelings around in a way that recalls the odder American pop miscreants of the moment (My Morning Jacket, Beachwood Sparks, etc.). But the spatial orientation of the music goes laid out in a way that makes me think of some weird, half-baked garage band trying to grab a handle on the material of John Cole's Pens 1919 and not quite figuring it out, but making a rather absorbing anti-rockin' racketology.

I just read describing the music of **Fax** as "post-wallpaper Techno" and that's about right. What mostly goes on while listening to EP Ore (Rockit Recor 3" CD) is that you notice patches of colour moving around the screen. Patches of soft, sweet huff get generated by machines, then they move through the place like gauze, while other machines make plucky sounds and still others gurgle like metal

chickens with seed in their beaks. Cosy? You better!

When I first encountered his work in the late 1960s, it was rumoured that writer/collage artist Alvaro del Piombo was actually a pseudonymous William S Burroughs. In the intervening years, the true identity of Piombo was revealed to be Norm Rutherford, but that did nothing to diminish the crazed power of the work. I mention this only because **Fuzz Against Jack** took their name from one of Piombo's great books. The group's record is great, too. Trenzinho (Inneda 7") has moments of classic Hawkwind-style prole-rousing muck, plus splattered passages of improv explosion, and even iniquitous Lucy Farmer-esque instrumental Prog-folk workouts. It's a goddamn blast of a record, and hard to peg as a lout on a scooter. Piombo would be proud.

Their website seems to be inert, so maybe it's

true that thud-rokers **Geoge** are no more. The bits and pieces of their work that have roared across the ocean have all seemed like emanations of a very high quality and that sentiment is reinforced by Mosquitos/Mos Pump (Inneda 7"). Neither as sluggish nor as drowsy as do many of their brethren, Ganga Fuga a mighty thump with forthright and non-ironic charm. Like everyone in the Obsessed and St Vitus cults, their journey begins in the bowels of Black Sabbath, but they really manage to do things with a form that may gross just lol around. At any rate, the single is sick, live and L. What more could you ask for?

Because of my pronouced roots, I originally thought that Cambridge's **Lightbulb** might be a Germs tribute band. But that impression was eradicated by the first pick of the first note on the City Will Go Out in the Woods (Warrentime Recordings 7"). With all the steady dolorousness of early Leonard Cohen, they combine guitar, cello, and melancholy with strong, quiet heads. It's beautiful, mood-swinging, post-pysch funk.

The **Rejins** deserve their sound as "pastoral electronica", but it's a whole lot more humanised than that description lets on. *Conner & Family* (7") has one side that combines keys and strings in a gentle semi-exotic way that makes me think of the Prog segments of Kevin Ayers' *Confessions Of Dr Dream*. But instead of Noa's voice rifling in through the hedges, what you hear is a loop of something sad and pre-literate. Very cool. The flip is more along the lines of their ends, releasing elegantly tapered backwoods rhythm motifs into clouds of pais and gristle

The most evil electronics record in a while arrives courtesy of a Norwegian, Vegard Waale, recording as **Short Circuit**. The Rebel Sound Of Hate & Fucking/When The Precies Are Right (Eddo Pekey 7") has some of the most gurgling pop-electronics to have passed this way in a while. Described as having more to do with hardcore and Metal groups than anything else, they're less harsh electronics than something that has the power to disgust without being flat-out assaultive. Their pieces often click around in a way that seriously twists your ability to pay attention to maintaining your own bodily functions, or else they spread themselves across the air in a manner a whole lot more impenetrable than it ends up feeling.

There was a time when a whole lotto rock group used a procedural approach that owed something or other to Television and/or The Velvet Underground and/or one of the groups that sacked at those groups' funerals. Over the past decade (and then some) this has become a massive trend. But I'm happy to report that it is present on the debut single by **A Soft Persuasion**, who recently moved from the west coast of Florida to the western hills of Massachusetts. Last Hooray/Modern Saint (A Soft Persuasion 7") has a really nice edge to its guitar interplay and a solid propagation to the material that makes me think of NRBQ. Which is a fairly great thing to think about, honest.

Illegal digital artist **Systrophes** has a rich enough sound to also verge into realms of Prog beauty. On R220 (Rockit Racer 7" CD), treated voxes wail in the background while small machine events pile up in ways that suggest actual craft. It's almost a modern electric slot car on the more songlike stuff that David Vorhaus did as White Noise. I love the way that the backing tracks have that old school sequencer plow them to. And you might too.

One would imagine that **Dobie P Lagarosa** was a poetic enough name to record under, but not for this Spazzoid, who in his chases a author more lofily morseled for his work. In **Caddie Reversé Dans l'Herbe**. Quite a mouthful. And his new release, Now There's A Weird Taste In My Mouth (Dekader 7" CD) is as earful. The six tracks here will likely lots of humanned percussions things as a means to get aesthetically finger under the edges of the listener's scaps. Stuff seems very friendly at first, almost Adi-like — a little scalp massage with tiny hands. But as the wash-like vocals

wrap their cold fingers around your hairs, you start to get a little nervous. Then you begin shifting bags. Then it's over (BC).

From a label dedicated to outsider electronics come **Modified Toy Orchestra**, whose 500 edition This Is The Monkey/Tide To Joy (Warmer 7") is a manifestation of infantile skip culture, composed as it is entirely from toys retrieved from boot sales and then "recut bent" into various sonic equivalents of the army of mutants in Toy Story. This Is The Monkey" is the pick of these tracks. The vacuousness extraction from some cheap talking plastic toy of the life is wrought, screwed with and reshaped over a fitfully funky backbone which then dies interestingly away, before string bolt upright again just prior to the fadeout. "Ode To Joy" sets out with an initially unimposing cod-Meng buzz, bouncing off walls at regular angles like one of those electronic tennis games, before giving way to a distressed backwash, dissolving in its own vapour trails. This absolutely exhaustless piece of plastic does nothing else, pushes no particular agenda forward and in that "uselessness" resides its usefulness and value.

In 1997, three London-based artists, Amanda Moss, Adrian Jones and Marisa Carter, formed a performance art troupe called The Dragon Ladies and produced a piece of devout theater known as The Grottoque Baroque Revue, based around fables of the mendacious Bluebird. In this accoutre, Captain Bluey names an innocent music hall singer named Goli, whom he then munderns, casts in gaudopian and converts into the ship's figurehead, only for the ship to be wrecked. Mel Dolly to be reviewed as a psychopathic prostitute, averaging her death on unsuspecting sailors. **Cesare Beccaria**'s remixed mini-scoretrack to this piece, The Grottoque Baroque Revue (In De Stede 7" CD) captures the righteously, carbonated essence of this fable in expressionist electric colours, from the optimistic sway of the ship on "Dolly's Theme", to the flailing, cocking sound demons of "Return To The Chamber", to the screaming and stabbing plastic synth emmissions that herald the murder. This is by no means as effective sonic storytelling as, say, The Residents' Eskimo but it does capture some of the psychological terror intended in the original production. Catiously, it's more sinister when played softly, in keeping with the miniature former. (OMS) □ Reviewed by Bryan Coley and David Staines

Here are three discs which find the Massath in action with various disciples. No one could accuse the opening of *A Vene Fai A Hindou*, recorded in Vienna at the end of 2003, of being a sonic build-up. Haugstetter's and Dürmer's trumpets sputter alongside gongs @figuratively picked off the guitar. During the 13th minute Rowe switches his radio on with a thud, and the space floods rapidly with the sacking of white static. It's only a short fury before all returns to a crackling low drone and peculiar bleeping percussive beats from Rowe. The other track, "Cadmium Yellow/Laqueous", is a 21 minute creak in which all innate characteristics of the instruments are blended into a conflict. It's exactly what Edé Pélvost (first book: *No Sound Is Innocent*) objects to: electronics and volume driving the narrative, rather than a meaningful negotiation between individuals', although it's not clear why these negotiations between individuals would be any more or less meaningful than those between the three players of *AMM*.

*Lies At The Lii*, with Christian Fennessy (LU = Leu Unique in Names), is a duoshow set-to, a continuous piece with four taken track separations. The encounter appears to have Fennessy's self doubts for the first quarter-hour. He finally titrates some digital chips into the crucible, provoking a grumpy fire-up from Rowe. Fennessy lies disappointingly low throughout the 43 minutes, his software shadowing Rowe's fertile cracklings. A potentially combustible pairing turns out to lack chemistry.

Recorded in 2003 at Musique Action, *Honey Pie* is the oldest take of these three. What Pélvost hears as post-ethnoes, these ears decode as tentative stirrings of a primordial swamp. The exchange here is quiet, but busy, and the closer you focus, the closer you get to a fascinating insectoid world of maddened chatter and screeching labour. A palpable atmosphere, a kind of conversation, is certainly going on between the two guitars and personasson Avenam, but this is Amprov at a level far beyond notions of that kind of interplay. It's a kind of implausible Isaac, on a scale that confounds that works incredibly well on CD, away from the event that spawned it. Intricacy is sacrificed towards the end for a noise pile-up that would probably have Edé Pélvost reaching for the smelling salts. All sound may be guilty, but it makes for damn fine courtroom drama.

## MICHAEL RÜSENBERG LA DÉFENSE STAGE URBAIN REAL AMBIENT CD BY DAVID WILKINSON

La Défense is to Paris what Canary Wharf is to London, a sprawl of predominantly corporate skyscrapers spanning the nearby towns of Puteaux and Courbevoie across the Seine three miles to the west of the Aile de Triomph. In May 2001 sound artist Michael Rüsenberg took his microphones there on a warm spring evening to record everything, from the local ledges hanging out rattling on the steps of the new Grande Arche to the insidious whirr of escalators and ventilators in the high railway station under La Défense's central esplanade.

*La Défense - Stage Urbain* is a 38 minute work in seven continuously running movements, whose titles sometimes provide useful clues to the source sounds. "La Défense Artificiel" captures

the asymmetry of the central access to the station, from the myriad footsteps of massed commuters and the beeps of the new electronic Navigo Metro tickets to the squeaks and whines of dozens of escalators. Elsewhere, his approach to his source material is more abstractive, but in no way averse to explicit pulse. Even before the beatboxing of the closing "Rap d'Arche" and his descent onto the descended platforms of the Metro to tessel back into Paris, infectious groove lark beneath the surface, established on "First Flute".

Not surprisingly perhaps, the other musicians he chooses to temper his material, including Steve Beres, Eric La Cosa, Ned Bouleau and Benoit Delbecq, pick up on the beat, with varying degrees of success. Ned Bouleau, born in La Mans but now resident in Canada, is as happy to be compared to Aphex Twin as he is to his musical concubine mentor Francis Dhomont, and his "Le Chœur Du La Défense" gleefully jumps on Rüsenberg's implied backbeats to cook up seven minutes of skittishly mixed drums 'n' bass. In contrast, Angélique "Metis Mix" (from *The Push Seats*), is a little more than a fizzy mid-tempo groove, and Delbecq seems compelled to add some of his own piano playing to a curious and inconclusive ends to the album. Only Eric La Cosa's "Une Région, À La Périphérie Da Guita" resists the beat, preferring to concentrate on La Défense's resonant spaces

## SEPTEMBER COLLECTIVE SEPTEMBER COLLECTIVE GEOGRAPHIC CD BY KEN HOLLINGS

Working together at various locations in Poland and Germany during August and September of 2002, Barbara Magendien, Paul Wilkus and Stephan Schneider, on a brief sabbatical from To Rocoo Ut and Naphtastix, have conspired to create a quiet piling up of moments. This is a brief and slender collection, carefully arranged over barely half an hour, but its effects have a tendency to spread.

Deriving their origin from the enclaves in which all three musicians participated while touring Poland on the same bill, each of the ten group compositions have the feel of something preserved against eventual decay. A ready organ line here, a repetitive burst of flonged sound there, the hollow beat of an old drum machine slowly traversing the envelope of an entire track – all appear to have been carefully arranged like a selection of pressed leaves in a album.

In similar vein to Sessions, Magendien's EP on Domino with Tim Heesom-Röts Robert Lipkus, the disc evokes the four seasons out of fragile assemblages of sound, a temporal shift emerges over this quiet succession of pieces. Beginning with the loose meating of repeated tones on "Wendis" and ending with the hazy gathering of "Three In One", there's an autumnal mood of harvest, fruition and an eventual return to the earth here. This may only be a temporary state of affairs, however. For now being a one-off project, there are already plans for the trio to work together again in the future.

## SHRIMP BOAT SOMETHING GRAND AUM ROSEITY SXCD BY IAN CLARKE

When Shrimp Boat formed in 1985, founding members Ian Schneller, Sam Pekop, and David

Kroll were studying at the Art Institute of Chicago. Upon discovering that Kroll had been earnestly playing a homemade banjo in private for many years, the students decided to start making music together and quickly established a reputation as a challenging live act by regularly playing three-hour improv sets in counterculture bookstores.

Something Grand is a comprehensive, beautifully presented anthology of Shrimp Boat's eight year development, which saw four major live up-charge, four commercially released albums, and many shifts in musical direction. This three disc collection (four, including a bonus disc of live cutaways and 'works in progress' included with the first 2000 copies sold) consists of unreleased or rare-as-hen's-teeth songs recorded between 1985 and their demise in 1993. Disc one combines tracks from Shrimp Boat's first two albums, *Sonic Biscuit* and *Daylight Savings*, which were consecutively released during 1988 in editions of 100 cassettes apiece. All the material on this disc was recorded on a four-track machine in the group's shared apartment, and perfectly captures the arc of their evolution. These were frequently spurts of the moment recordings rarely emulated live, demonstrating Shrimp Boat's early interest in moulding weird form into songlike structures. Kroll's homemade banjo provides many of the leading melodies and, on tracks such as "Rodis Are Ol", his chipper stiffs prove a charming partner to Schneller's undulating guitar lines. This first disc contains their most varied body of work.

Discs two and three focus on the period between the release of Shrimp Boat's best known albums, *Specky* (1989) and *Dwende* (1992). Schneller used a mobile DAT recorder to document the group's progression both onstage and during piano jam sessions, and many of the tracks here, like "Fuzy Tremolo", "Honeydip", and the free jazz brashness of "Brack", are so striking, it's unbelievable they remained unreleased for more than a decade.

Though always highly regarded in Chicago, Shrimp Boat's involvement in the shaping of the city's music scene, their DIY ethics, and their uncompromising approach has been perplexingly under-appreciated elsewhere. Focus tends to fall on the members' post-Shrimp Boat afterlives. When they disbanded, Pekop and bass player Eric Claviger went on to form The Sea And Cicat, and Schneller released an album as Falstaff. The collection of early Ryerian, rare photographs, interviews, and detailed sleeve notes complete this bootlegging and teaching insight into the group's career while underlining the importance of their achievements.

## SOLID EYE VOYAGE TO SEE WHAT'S ON THE BOTTOM MELON EXPANDER CD JOSEPH HAMMER DYNASTY SUITES MELON EXPANDER CD BY TOM RECHNICK

There's a loop in Sleeping Beauty's Castle at Disneyland that is astounding. It supports a tableau of the three fairies sleeping. Sounding full of drama, tension, mystery and of the moment, it's assumed that spectators will walk through quickly enough not to hear the repetition. But if you stand in one spot and take

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# The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Between anger and anguish: Masayoshi Tsuru

For more than a decade now, photographer Yutji Iwami has been documenting how musicians in Tokyo for PSF's house periodical *G-Media* and his photography book, *Free KW*. Here he has compiled the excellent *Undecided* (PSF CD), from the series of lecture-concerts he curated under the banner JMSA Presents Wave From Free Music. His psychologically penetrating photo portraits make you nostalgic for LP jackets rather than an *Undecided*'s CD booklet, which is completed by Iwami's notes and interviews with the participants. Unfortunately, they're in Japanese but the unpacking — on paper — music-lecture set-up is quickly dispelled even as it is honoured in the way the six contributors work within the characteristics of their chosen instruments. Well, OK, it's difficult to pin down the virtuosity of Domo Yoshida's breathless noise but its tunable source, but the seller's other most full-on track, produced by Koji Hano on handy-gurdy, is all the more entralling for the pleasure he evidently takes in a medieval instrument that combines a gronkhandle mechanism with churning strings. Though several volume notches later, Kazuo Inai's scratchy and scraped guitar body and strings make for an equally compelling physical examination.

Mitsuhiko Sato's tsugaru shamisen piece is more attractively contemplative than its robust noise normally allows, while Junichiro Okuychi's salso piano improvisation cuts off its melancholy breather into a sweet. In contrast, the tense silences puncturing Masayoshi Tsuru's closing saxophone piece pitch it precariously between engir and angish, as if it possibly scores another rare entry into this astonishing performance artist-musician's slowly aching anachor of pain. (SB)

The music of the Cambodian diaspora — Thailand, Paris, Rhode Island, southern California, etc — is bearing remarkable fruit just now. It was in Oakland that Neung Phak's Magik Gang rose across a host of "tagged castaways" in his public history, and picked 20 favourites for the wonderful *Cambodian Cassette Archive: Khmer Folk And Pop Music Vol. 1* (Sublime Frequencies CD). Spanning the 1960s to the 1980s, this music represents a fabulous collision between the robust traditional Khmer culture and whatever mid-to-top style had arrived from the West that week. South East Asian vocal cultures, early fiddles, sweeping synophones and elegant finger cymbals all sound remastered by their blind date with surf guitars, Farfisa organ, Buddy Holly and Studio One reggae.

Sadly, many artists and even song titles can't be identified, so its upbeat giddy-pop classic

completes with brass section and Beatles influence can only be referred to as "Track 11," "Track 9" or an all too brief crossover in which traditional percussion and pop guitar are perfectly balanced. "Track 15" heralds the arrival of Black Sabbath in Khmer culture, and also demonstrates that it is actually impossible to put too much echo on a Cambodian female vocal. After building up the verse hooks? "Track 16" shows the way while "Track 18" is a psychadelic balledo whilst woody harmonies probably sound like Jim Morrison's nightmares.

Your zero in Cambodia is of course the Pot Pot holocaust starting in 1975, during which virtually all musicians were killed or fled overseas. Pre-70s was the golden age of Phnom Penh popular song, and six of the album's 20 press dates from the early 80s, be it glorious vocal stuns like Cambodia's Ring Crosby, Siem Saramoth ("Don't Let My Girlfriend Think Me"), and Ross Seney Sonthea. Since 1975 we hear dance band stylings grafted onto Western innovations, lengad trumpet solos and ringing of great sasophonists. Post-70s guitars and guitars begin to dominate and the music inevitably gets cruder, though often with a tremendous, post-apocalyptic party attitude. While 80s Cambodia in pop is, I confess, one of my favourite musicals of all time, virtually none of it is available through normal channels, so we should be more than grateful for this spirited compilation. (CB)

One of the subtlets of Italo Calvino's book *Invisible Cities* is that of cities share millions of dimensions yet each city is unique. It's a matter of perspective. 15 composers, poets, visual artists and DJs contribute to *The Modern City: Sound Portraits From Göteborg* (Sub Rosa CD) and they provide as many perspectives. Does this amount to a portrait of the city? If so, it's one the local tourist board wouldn't recognise. Dan Fréberg's marvellous "Vitun School," which features a typically ragged children's music class in full swing, is once the teacher addresses her class, identifiably Swedish if not quite Göteborg. But the contributions from Johannes Heilien, Christia Kubisch, Matapatan, Christoffer Brus, Lars Carlsson and Henrik Rylander could have been recorded just about anywhere and relate to almost any place. This is also true of "Party Plateaupus," Alva Noto's playful space and elegant spin on a melodic spoken word slice of River Lenape material. But perhaps I shouldn't be so literal. Although the CD is the mass/sound counterpart to a book, *The Naked City: People And Places In Göteborg* (Glimakra Production 2004), it works perfectly well on its own. (BM)

Earlier this year electronics composer Ron Kuivila curated a sound art event at New York's

Art In General exhibition space that is now supplemented by *Rock's Rule (After Ryōanji)* (Art In General CD). 17 artists, including Stephen Vitiello, Michael Schumacher, Maggie Payne, Future Remin, Barbara Held and Masataka Sumura answered Ryōanji's call for pieces responding to Jeni Cagé's Ryōanji, music inspired by a Japanese Zen garden where 15 boulders sit in a field of naked pebbles. At the exhibition, the multiple speaker arrangement enabled visitors to experience from a variety of positions both the particularity of sounds and their overlap — what Cage had conceived in his own work as qualities of "multidirectionality" and "interpretation." On Kuivila's compilation the crisp kiss of billiard balls, combined by Japanese composer Bernhard Gitt, occurs again and again, a lapidary sound embedded in mixed sonic shingle that incorporates synthesizer drones, captured chatter, instrumental samples, tape noise, environmental snippets, subdued scraping, bell calls and wind-blown flute. Even within the CD's limited perspective, the piece is as appropriately comprehensive, inviting meditation on filth and change, specificity and interdependence. It successfully evokes the curious coexistence in the Ryōanji garden of clarity and enigma. (JC)

The relationship between avant pop and actors of childhood has been persistent, complex, and at times infuriatingly twin. Recent technologies, however, have enabled this fixation to be pursued in more inventive and venerated ways than the Impact culto guitar strumming of ya. *Seventy Uzumaki* (Music Radical CD) is based on loose interpretations of Aya Uzumaki, an installation by artist Mamoru Friends With You and George IMC. A Not of started toys, animation and drawings, it goes way beyond the whimsical — images from the exhibition are monstrous, like all your childhood playthings, crepey socks and memories staring up at you from the ceilings of the subconscious. The group selected by Mumblebab and co., some Japanese, others American, provide a soundtrack to this aging spectacle of all things shiny and intense, one that evokes both nostalgia and fear.

America's Photo open with "Adoles Pölder (Apagón)," a carousel of samples and crooning, Yacht's bright, plastic primary colours are reflected in a glassy hell of mirrors on "House Boat Are Lostes," while the electric pianist-patter of Lullabone's "Soothing Sounds For Puppies" is feebly poobling. Not everything works — one or two of the Japanese offerings are too amateur, too cute, too toytown — but Midori Hamada's "Silver Apples Of The Moon" amply compensates, with its ambiguous and

disorienting synthwaves, while Crusher's "Hunting Little Bears" deserves uneasy applause for its life alone. (DS)

Back to back and facing each other, the two discs comprising *ZIM VS HMF: Where Is My Robotic Boat?* (Hydratead 2002) try to keep things loud and rangy but the material tends to get itself a little lost among the conceptual detail. Concerning unleased tracks from California Metal label Hydratead and its digitally energized subsidiary ZIM, this set attempts to bring the noise by placing wuxi horn such high definition tweakers as Mastodon, Kill666 and Tiffes Of Neurot alongside the sweaty buzzaw grunting of Orthrus, The Austerity Program and Phantasmagoria. The undertaking might have maintained a little more snap if the lapsteel and guitars hadn't been so rigorously separated at the outset. True, said, both sides give as good as they get. Kid606 supplies two stringent new compositions to open and close the 29+ set; Craig Douglas's "Drawing Voices: Shortwave One" has genuinely speedy sweep to it, and the reverberating shoves on "Thoughts About [A]" from Monotaxis keep themselves in a state of creepy suspension. Picking up Metal on the Hydratead side, the magnificently titled Jan Michael Vincent: *Car Crash* have a lead vocalist who sounds like he's gnawing with blade fluid; Klatare is a kick-ass guitar-swing version of Earth's "German Death Wish"; and Goonolot make a fine honky-fest of "Deep In The Dim." Next time round, the two bands should be allowed to mix and mingle more. (KH)

Documenting a live showcase for Poland's emerging electronic music scene that took place in Warsaw in 2003, *AK+FE (EDM CD)* was done in collaboration with the Austrian Cultural Forum, and it drew some sharp and suggestive connections between Austrian and Polish experimentalism. AK+FE includes adventurous sonic hackers Jacek Stasiakowski and William Forni from the Neuband collective working in various permutations with former EA members Vilen and Mem, and fine music innovator Robert Podrowicz. Austria is presented by Christian Fennessy on guitar and laptop, Meg's Pto getting jiggly with it on "Naom Aspin Ver.57136 Mix," and Lalalilac's eccentric loop formations. The playing is sprited and sensitive throughout, but what comes across most strongly is the collaborative ethos running through the Polish contributions. Looks like we could all learn something from the next AK+FE festival! (KH) □

Reviewed by Clive Bell, Samantha Brown, Julian Cowley, Ken Hollings, Brian Marley and David Stubbs



the time to listen and let others pass, something more wonderful is revealed, and you are transported.

*Magenta to See What's On The Bottom* is the fourth Solid Eye disc. They've become one of the keenest practitioners of sonic fabric and acidic mayhem. Avoiding shorter pieces in favour of five unified chapters that flow from one to the next – surprisingly, just as it was recorded. Their new release finds the group at their most measured and focused. The whole thing feels like a recording made in a cheap ornate room, the type of dark hide you see at transient county fairs and festivals. But this is no field recording, they make every sound. The rubbing, clicking and clattering mechanics of the pad on its bed, the wheels rolling on the floor, the chintzy motor, the flip-flop of the not-really-so-sight gags all partied in black light double print that pop out at you as you pass by as well as the disembodied screams and chitter of photons which are somewhere further ahead of you in the dark. Then there's the soundtrack, played on multiple speakers spread throughout the winding path which has been assembled by some horrific nimble whose source are old horror sound effects records and his guttural screaming into an old funky tape recorder. There's at this sound and essence surrounding you.

Each member's signature moves are in crisp evidence. Rick Potts, co-founding member of the LAFMS and Human Hands, has a personal touch full of human. Moving from his "stinged-neck guitar", rotors, metal slay sampler and trebly Stevie Ray琴, Rick demonstrates his constant search for new sounds from his familiar instruments, aside of his own invention.

Steve Thorsen, ex-member of the highly underrated rock group Monitor and founder of Ward Initiator, the art collective from the San Fernando Valley who were kindled sparks to Pasadena's LAFMS, plays keyboards, his usual instrument of choice. The influence of desert landscapes, the desirousness of rock and deep-water fish and paranormal phenomenon is prominent. It's the first time his contributions have been heard so front and center. Steve provides the group's lyrical atmospheres, which seem to hold everything together, since what he contributes often washes underneath the others. He's the link out of technology and into nature.

Dynasty States is the long awaited first solo release by the third member of Solid Eye, the tape legend Joseph Hammer. Through the years, beginning with *Poems Of Friction*, Hammer has perfected a technique that utilizes the tape loop and recorder to its fullest. While holding the loop in his gloved hand he constantly manipulating the tape itself, moving it over the heads, allowing fragments of material he feeds the machine from its loop to swap different parts of the loop with sound. The playback head then makes audible the evolving elations of material picked up by the recorder. It's the audio equivalent of a billboard that, peeling away after being washed, reveals partial glimpses of what was once pasted there.

## TOYCHELLA & FRED FRITH WHAT LEAVE BEHIND:

8K CD

BY MIKE BARNES

In the mid-'90s, Dan Plonsey spent five years presenting weekly concerts at the University of

California, Berkeley. Two of his favourites were a solo concert by Fred Frith – now a visiting professor of music at that settlement establishment – and a performance by The Rochester. Wanting to hear more, he composed a 25 minute "Concerto For Guitar And My Orchestra" featuring both camps. One feels that Plonsey himself would probably smile at the description of the piece in this context. Most music for toys is either done for laughs, or simply sounds insubstantial and one-dimensional. It's rare that someone playing a toy bugle, say, is unlikely to move you like Don Cherry in full flight, but the all woman sextet – who were zebra, walls and meditina in with audio learning toys, recorders, whistles and xylophones – practice an appealing noise. Finally their parts are not too complicated but instead overlap in wind, colouring book hues.

This lesson is not off-the-wall as it might first seem. Frith's queasy spirit has found him subjecting his guitar to a number of domestic and culinary objects in the past, which he may well be doing at times here. Movement two, "Hell", jets stinks of its stoned guitar against a school music room procession with most affecting results, and it feels like an easy route to resexciting nerves. His delicate scrapping and textual work on "3 Elephants And A Cow" lead to keening, hued melodic lines and animated note-flurries against rhythmic drums and some dense mixing bongoing sounds – the movement's consonant part, presumably. The effect is absurd but impossible to dislike. The closing movement, a simple chorale deftly shaped by Frith called "Wives To Reward" is particularly disarming. As dreams go, Plonsey's was an unusual one, but he has hit with aplomb.

## TRIPELEY GAMBIT:

CLEAN FRED CO

BY BRIAN MORRISON

Only just 41, Ken Vandermark has already made a disproportionate mark on the free scene. Not that it's a boldly gauffered tag. In both his playing personality and his self-presentation, the saxophonist from Wauwatosa, Rhode Island, is notably modest, preferring to display his considerable gifts in names' ensembles like Steelwheel and Gambit, or his ongoing DRV trio, where he shares the billing with bassist Kent Kessler and percussionist Harold Budd. That said, his signature outfit is still the Vandermark Five, a group that showcases his brilliance as a composer. He's profiled as well, whether as frontman or as a honorary fourth wheel guest with the AALY trio. He's just counted 30 albums with his name on, all since 1983, and that's just the ones I know or have, what makes him hot?

Fine music, obviously, but also an astonishing array of other sonics, including rock, the classical ambitions that surfaced on *Transatlantic Bridge*, R&B and, on *Spaceports*, incorporate a bold hybrid of George Clinton P-Funk and San Ra's noise. Though a tenor player who sounds as if he might have had a spot of barreling and bolting back in the day, he also plays B-flat and bass clarinets.

Now, he reunites the trio that made *Expansion Slang* for Bothworld five years ago. Nate McBride also stood in for Kessler on

Spaceports' Incorporated and there signalled a very different approach to bass, more solidly rhythmic but also more lyrical. It's his presence that provides the informing character of Gambit, allowing Vandermark to explore a more thoughtful and low key side of his playing, and allowing drummer Curt Newton to express himself more freely than *Interceptor* does. Would also allow Curt to stand in for Bill, Fred ("gray") and you hear McBride hold the centre while Vandermark explores a fugitive idea on clarinet, and Newton alternates sputter time and loose, flutter patterns on his heads.

The bassist and drummer are heard for some time together on the opening "Rastro 5" before Vandermark comes in, low drier, and distinctly minimalist cadences that give the album its atmosphere of calm, though whether before or after the sun isn't clear. The telephone's Cool School entry is deceptive, contained and almost defiant. Only when the blues tonality comes in is its depth of feeling revealed.

It lacks off an extraordinary modern jazz album, one of the best from the saxophonist yet, but very much a group project. For all its seeming pimposity, and as Mark Corallo points out in a perceptive sleeve-note, Vandermark doesn't put it about with willy-nilly. Notes of his groups are more picky; every one has its particular logic, and with Tripleplay he's taken his understanding of the saxophone trio a step further.

## TU M' POP INVOLVED [VERSION 3.0]

PAULX CD

BY MATT FIFTY-ONE

Ever inventive and stylish in their modes of production, Northern Ireland's PAULX have moved on from their *Initial Object* Series of downloadable MP3s to a new project entitled Femic – a numbered edition of turn-to-order CDs (representing a teasing conjunction of the exclusive and the disposable) packaged in large jewel cases with the usual attractive minimalist design – in this case, the catalogue number is represented in data code at the bottom half of the cover.

The second release in the series features Italian duo Rossano Padella and Emiliano Romaniello as Tu m' – the name is taken from a 1918 mixed media work by Marcel Duchamp in which off and pencil designs of a bicycle wheel merge with a bottle brush, and a slash in the canvas is held together with safety pins. A similar delight in aesthetic disparities drives this short sonic vignettes, in which plucked and strummed acoustic guitars integrate with the queening, bubbling evasions of digital sound, making it difficult to tell harmonic overtones and string naps apart from feedback and glitch. The music can't grow, or beat down, but builds around judicious partial dives, looped and loosely assembled motifs, that interlace with and invade the casual instrumental patterns. On "Something Sweet In The Coffee", a fingered guitar riff ripples out into edgy ringing tones and pulsating synthetic textures with more than a nod to the hazy kaleidoscopic ambience of John Murphy's Ethopix techniques.

Elsewhere an accordian seems caught in anolan doodles of sound – flutes and picks which fold into the mix without displacing the

organic flute tonics. Lateral tracks develop a more restless and abrasive feel, calmerising in the overblown and distorted drone of "Moto Forte". There are even milking and rattling patterns of sound sounding Dachshund's Rotweiler, and yet Tu m' use disparity for regressive atmospheres rather than shock. If this is abstract music, it's also complex and scenic – flicking aggregated currents tend to lead into more amiable bursts of texture and colour.

## UXEDOMOON CABIN IN THE SKY

CRAMMED CD

## BLAINE L REININGER NIGHT AIR 2

UM CD

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Back in the late '70s and early '80s, Uxedomoon had a distinctive sound, among distant machine hardness with overing acoustic romance. Cabin In The Sky marks the reunion of their original trio, adding a 12th album to the census. The in-house style remains instantly recognisable, with only its electronic palette updated, in part by the guest presence of Taweret, John McEntee and DJ Hall.

For 1977 from them with the electronic music department of San Francisco City College, Uxedomoon released their first single "Dark Companion" on The Residents' Ralph Records. The trio moved to Brussels in 1981 and signed with Crammed. Today, Steven Brown lives in Mexico, Peter Principe in New York and Blaine Reininger flies between Italy and Greece. Later members, multimedia specialist Bruce Geduldig and trumpeter Luc Van Leuven both remain in Brussels.

The new songs are delivered in English, French and French, usually draped around one of Reininger's steadily minimalist baselines. Reininger's clarinet and violin are among the strongest elements, his vibraphone forming an ethereal farfisa army with Van Leuven's trumpet and Brown's saxophone. The opening run a song-based, infused with pent metitudes and melancholy flourishes. Reininger and Brown's vocal mantras are still rotted in the 1980s, lending a Gothic mock-serious tone. The flinic instruments impress the most, heightening the contrast between scatally guitar, subby electronics, meaty strings and calm piano.

Night Air 2 is dominated by Reininger's soundtrack work between 1989 and 1999. Its first volume was issued back in 1984. Constant European advertising has vilified his character with folk and pop, the kind of motifs that could turn up in cafes, circuses and street festivals. Along with singer Winston Tong, Reininger left Uxedomoon before their mid-1980s run of albums. Virtually a one-man band, he creates a panoramic sprawl of violin, viola, mandolin, keyboards, guitar and percussion beats. He frequently uses Greek and Middle Eastern flutes, then brings in some Michael Nyman-esque plodding on "Maria Man". The three part "Europe After The Rain" is particularly vivid; "Night Sheet" is a calm chamber piece, and "Ghost Of The Artist" men around the circus ring. Uxedomoon have been almost forgotten in recent years, but these two albums act as a reminder of their re-emerging influence.

# The Boomerang

## New reissues: rated on the rebound

Contributor: Ben Ra

In the winter of 1977-78, Sun Ra travelled to Italy, where he purchased a Crumar Marimba electric keyboard. Its effects, he said, are akin to a combination of "piano, organ, clavichord, cello, violin and brass instruments". On Ossio 2000 (Art Yard LP), Ra makes full use of its enormous galactic range, one the instrument makers themselves probably had no idea it held. He recorded the album along with Miles Davis (also to be reissued by Art Yard) in January 1978. These were unusual sessions in that Ra worked with a quartet, rather than his full Arkestra – an experiment probably necessitated by economics. Oscar 3000 is a cosmic expedition with three loyal crewmen, saxophone John Gilmore, trumpeter Michael Ray and drummer Luquen Ali. It falls to Ra, therefore, to fill out the sound electronically, supplying Moog basslines and more a drum machine. For those who tend to Sun Ra for his free loving, cosmic synthesiser vogey, Oscar 3000 makes for an especially joyful noise. The title track in particular, which takes up side one, is a glistening, interplanetary swirl, distant, twinkling superdense, earth pulsing and throbbing, tumbling in black holes. Amid all this, Ra's most loyal disciple Gilmore hollers his assent, bringing up great biffs of taurous soul through his honk, while newcomer Ray chimes in with less reverent wah-wah chatter. Side two features acoustic noise in the form of "Third Planet" and another colossally beautiful solo from Gilmore, who had he not sublimined his ego to Ra could and should have been a modern jazz giant in his own right. "Dance Of The Cosmic Aliens", meanwhile, returns to the wormhole electronic explorations of the title track. Despite the full throttle immensity of Disco 2000, what's strangely touching and compelling about it is the tiny, brushstroke patois of the drum machine, an abiding, plucky presence throughout, like an outboard motor attached to a spaceship. It inadvertently prompts the thought that despite the grand sonic and ideological dimensions and pretensions of Sun Ra and the Arkestra, there was a despoilt, tiny and fragile undertone, moving through a universe of indifference and commercial adversity.

This album was originally released by Recommended Records during as untypically fruitful time for Sun Ra – as such, it would have harvested a fresh crop of late 70s fans and prompted a resurgence of interest in his work that touched the likes of Sun Ra's Contarini, amid the likes of his releases over many years, this one is absolutely mandatory (DS).

**Sleep Happy & Heavy** Cow's Desperate Straight (Koch/Megacorp CD) is a skewed jewel

of 1970s English rock, a protest from stage left that this music didn't have to be mired in bombast and anti-intellectualism. It's a convivial pooling of resources between the two groups whose members were by now all composing – Stepp Happy's debut was in 1972, Henry Cow in '73, and Desperate Straight first appeared in 1975. Sleep Happy's Anthony Moore and Peter Blegvad lied the way with the snappy dada cabaret of "Some Questions About Hate", and the hot horn and trumpet cascade of "The Owl". "A Worm Is At Work" plunges into self-doubt, questioning whether the first two songs are any good, and offering one of the album's finest tunes. After the intense, taut writing of the opening five tracks, the title instrumental – Moore's piano and Chris Cutler's drums with their feet up in a bar – comes as a breath of fresh air. Fred Frith's jagged guitar announces "Riding Tigress", Blegvad's more straightforward rock writing, and Blegvad himself sings "Strayed" – Imagine Lou Reed tackling Maelo Proust. The intricate joyride is leavened by good humour and wacky playing. Tim Hodgkinson's clarinet, Lindsey Cooper's bassoon and Midge Ure's trumpet add shiny. Degener Krouse is confronted by the awesome task of how to deliver this singer-unfriendly material. On the opener she tightens her throat for an unringing cabaret style, but later somehow manages to find enough space, as on "Bad Alchemy", to inject passion into the central chamber compositions. (CS)

Label label MID has reissued two rare slabs of French Prog-Jazz (MID CD) as the 1975 soundtrack to the film *Groupe Pattern* by Philippe Besenness, who abandoned studies in chemistry to custom-build electronic instruments from mineral "salagou" from his family labs and ended up with an honorary mention at Steven Spielberg's *Nuit Lust*. It's an entertaining and accomplished peace pack full of spiky vocals, groovy organ chitter, prepared pianos, sitars, blasts of free jazz and also some inevitable and hideous guitar blues breakout not attributed to Bezenness, which he does his best to sensible end. Exactly what you'd expect from someone who used to hang out with both Xenakis and Jean-Michel Jarre, "La Ville" is a cunning montage of late Söfthaus thriller groove and concrete information overload.

Fast forward three, and glam-punk nightshifter Alan Parsons and other chic young Portians were digging *The New York Dolls* and *The Sex Pistols*. Meanwhile, out in the shadow of the darkness of Finistère, Didier Le Galis (who's since disappeared without trace) and seven others, collectively known as **Ramen Dials**, were invoking the spirits of the ancient Roman cult of Japhet with an assortment of

instruments including bombardons, Celtic flutes and de rigueur mellotrons that even then sounded as dated as their Latin name. The impossibly obscure Symptome-Die (MID CD), recorded in rural Brittany in 1978, a heady cocktail of faux-troubadour virgin vocalists, horrific parping synths, cheesy chromatic scales, harmonicas and vibraphones, was dedicated "to all extraterrestrials known and unknown", and the group's one and only single "Découverte" / "Nuit Close", also included, certainly belongs in outer space with its queasy, throbby modal synth ticks and deliciously out of sync drums. (DW)

Unlike the 2003 attack on loss, there were few astute responses to the 1991 Gulf War. Former This Heat drummer Charlie Hayward took exception to the crude, distinctly Orwellian quality of the CNN-led TV coverage, which depicted the war as a sporting event via video game. Switch On War (Sub Rosa CD) was an immediate impassioned outcry first performed three days after the US-led bombing campaign began and then recorded one month later on the day the ground war massacre began. The CD comes with preset drum patterns that are played with and damaged, conveying the raw, provisional character that is an integral feature of the work. Hayward chooses a limited repertoire, basing these fine pieces largely on long, fused electric organ drones reminiscent of some of John Cage's experimental works from the 1960s. The sustained chords of "Stringogramm Dreidline ("Forbitrage") are left hanging and unresolved, speaking viscerally of uncertainty, dread and an aural watchfulness. Each piece is accompanied by sense, minimalist poetic texts but only three of them are read about "Sweetheart" is the most literal piece, with samples that sound like a bombing and paraging, a thunderous roll of drums that sends the levels into the red and make the heart jump in mortal fear. After the war it emerged that a mere seven per cent of the bombs dropped were smart and that a quarter of a million Iraqi people had lost their lives. These facts alone indicate this powerful, rough-hewn and indignant work is that of one Hayward's strongest solo records (PE).

A wistful nostalgia perhaps. **Janes Chance's** own sleeve notes to his retrospective set *Sax Educator* (Tiger Style 2002) note that for many years, till builder for the nights when he would emerge from a bar and get knocked down by an automobile, then ask its concerned driver to keep him off of CBGB's rather than the emergency ward. This was back at the turn of the 1970s/80s, when his groups (the Corsettes, James White And The Blackajax) were juiced up into a compacted funk state, tightly coiled to spur on

their leader's abstract saxophone gushes and his manic vocal declamations. The first disc handicaps selections from most of Chance's ever-changing line-ups, gathering tunes from Off White, Fleuret Demone, Sax Maniac and Bay The Corsettes. Bass, drums, scowky guitar and clapped organ are knitted into an extreme tautness, sometimes filled out by sneering grile choruses and a slick, jolting horn section. Pat Place and Robert Quine are responsible for the denuded guitar interplay of "Off Black", Roger Cormell's remix of "Corset Yourself" is a radical stepping, and "The Devil Made Me Do It" features a paralytic of bawling horns. Compared to most improving jazzes, Chance's technique is fairly primitive, but it's the visceral abandonment that counts.

The second disc is devoted to a live Radio Holland broadcast from Eindhoven in 1981. Chance's vocals sound better than they do in the recording studio. *Slow, Desperate and Strained*. The group is at times startlingly minimal, with several of the leader's saxophones solos writhing against a drum-only backdrop. Chance is not reticent about acknowledging his own past, but this collection certainly justifies his self-inflation. (ML)

In 1979, **SPH** were among a first wave of German punk groups, their coined two-minute anthem akin to Wieso circa Punk Flag in their density and brevity. However, by their second album, 1980's *PST*, Horger Couquer, that arch-mediator between 70s avant rock and punk was producing them, and a treat at once their sound became decompressed, a process which would have found out the vast majority of two-chord wonders of that era. However, as *Ungelgreen: Essential Recordings 1978-2002* (Gitarrenhouse 2XCD) amply attests, SPH turned out to be a band made up of many rubber strands. The first CD of this collection captures their relatively rocky/sloppy side, which runs a disquietingly conventional gamut from the submitted Beatles-like "Plamme" to "Schlutz De Natur" ("Protect Nature") on which violinist Harry Rag spits "Bau! Bau! Schütze!" ("Build! Build! Shut!"), a mode of lyrical satire perfectly suited to the German tongue.

It's on the second disc that SPH's full range is exhibited – like German predecessors Rast they had the ability to metamorphose into a new grasp for each song, from the scenario-bent post-rock of 1985's "Nur Ein Treppen" to the tense, ton-screaked club of the unreleased "Impression One", to the chink-screamed guitar mania of 1986's live "Wie Freudien", to the conspicuously Crayola-influenced 13 minutes of the pinaceous "Rauchbar". (OS) □ Reviewed by Clive Bell, Phil England, Martin Longley, David Stubbs and Dan Warburton



**FRED VAN HOVE**

**Spraak & Roll**  
WIMPROFICIET NEDEN 32CD  
BY DAN WARBURTON

Spraak & Roll showcases the phenomenal musicality and technique of Belgian pianist Fred Van Hove, for more than 35 years one of old Europe's major improvisers. The 16 short pieces of the Spraak disc remind us how much his passion owes to the Romantic tradition of the étude — brief yet formally coherent compositions dedicated to particular aspects of performing techniques.

But these aren't just oral five-finger exercises. In Van Hove's work technique has always been a means to end rather than an end itself. For sheer musicality listen to how "RANDOM" unfolds logically from the intervallic information contained in its opening chords — great students in Music Theory should be made to transcribe and analyze it. It's as rich and subtle as a dish of watercress.

The second Roll disc is largely taken up with "Roll-over," a huge edifice that, like "Roue Rante" on 1996's *Roue* (Polychir), reveals a special fondness for the piano's lower octaves. If Van Hove's admiration for Ligeti is well documented, his Lust and Schumann who come to mind here, both creators of great sprawling 19th century piano works seemingly incapable of reining in their musical material. But through it all Van Hove never loses sight of the music's overall formal sweep — there's a sense of depth and integrity to it all born of experience and maturity.

**VARIOUS INSECTS**

**BROKEN-HEARTED DRAGONFLIES: INSECT ELECTRONICA FROM SOUTH-EAST ASIA**

DUBLIN FREQUENCIES CD  
BY DAVID TOOP

Is it possible to TRUST a person who caps sp words at RANDOM, as if such spastic barking helps to enforce a DUBIOUS point? The Sun City Girls' Nan Blouse does exactly that in his explanatory notes to the release of insect sounds recorded in Thailand, Burma and Laos. The story he relates is (or might be) a Burmese folk tale of male dragonflies, whose chests supposedly explode in the post-coital moment. Bishop's

Burmese wife heard the story, and has incorporated its Ripley's "believe it or not" charm as what he calls "poetic spin": "I CAN attest to seeing dead dragonflies with what looks exactly as she describes," he writes, "beaten-open chests laying dead on the ground as the rest of the living ones are still beating at top volume from the trees above."

Already, I'm on my guard. What are these guys doing in Burma anyway? Has anybody even begun to consider the ramifications? And what about this statement so surprising that it needs an exclamation mark: "These recordings were not processed, the insects actually sound like this!" Of course, they don't sound like this at all. Tucked Martine may be engineer or producer of choice for the likes of Bill Frisell, but his field recordings here sound thin, one-dimensional, as leached out as the rusty passbook, fuzzy photos printed in the CD booklet. Compare them to remarkable bioacoustic recordings of insects made by David Dunn, Beate Krause, Doug Quan, Jean Roché, Francisco López and Chris Watson. There's little of their depth here, far less sense of being immersed in a complex ecosystemation of individual voices, no clarity and definition.

Instead, we get a lot of distortion. A guy who's good in the studio gets stuck in a room trying to adjust his craft, to modify his performance for a moment, this does capture the dither-tilter intensity of insect sounds. Considering the small size of insects and their sounding mechanisms, they are capable of extraordinary volume, what PT Izzie's in his book *Insect Sounds*, describes as "a very efficient transfer of energy from mechanism to medium." However, there's a huge gap between the mangled high frequencies presented on the CD — a sensation of having one's eyeballs scraped vigorously with broken toothpicks — and the experience of lying in a hammock, feeling overwhelmed, reading, then striking with the rhythmic and tonal complexities of a jungle night.

Neither am I convinced by the occasional high pitch arch which I think (with some similarity to the hotheaded feedback of Alan Lomax's *Bed And Person Dreaming*) up to a climax of bearing frequencies. This is nothing like anything I've heard before from insects, in any rainforest or recording. If it's an accurate documentation of

something that actually happens, I'd like to know more about how it's done, why it's done, because it's remarkable and it doesn't seem possible. If it's locked up in Martine's Seattle studio, on the other hand, then I don't want to be told it's not processed, in the end, I've nothing against the presentation of environmental recordings as audio fixtures, but I need to feel in good hands before I'll go with it.

**SEIICHI YAMAMOTO**

**BAPTISM**  
TAKIBIKI CD

**AGATA SPIKE**  
TAKIBIKI CD  
BY JOHN NELLEY

Despite their incendiary recent gigs in the UK, the current status of Osaka's Baptism is a mystery to anyone outside the cultish enclave of Tambora Eye. While those recent drum circle shows were billed as by The Baptists, the group's name is actually now Voorebans, changed when guitarist Seiichi Yamamoto left after 2001's extraordinary *Wast Creation* festival.

Since his departure, Yamamoto has plotted a course away from the synthistic extravaganzas that made his name, collaborating with a range of musicians including violinist Phoebe and Orome Goto. For his latest solo outing on Takibiki, he adopts a light, immensely pretty jazz/folk style that (as the obi-ang coaxes) sits somewhere between Joepie Spaans and Derek Bailey. Apart from the occasional recurring snare, much of Baptism feels improvised, but even the most scribbled notes here never sound jarringly Rother. It's an exercise in delicate understatement, in subtiled virtuosity, with Yamamoto finding a balance between gusto concentration and a let loose air of languor.

Guitarist Agata, meanwhile, is significantly less melodic on this first disc subtitled from the frenetic *Melt Banana*. Spike moves through 25 tracks in 40 minutes, with Agata displaying a similarly iconoclastic, occasionally dog-worrying range of frequencies that he uses in his day job from the punk velocity of *Melt* (basics, it's possible to appreciate his manic skills more, as pattered skron crashes into great whooshing feedback). Adding further to the complexity with

some violent stabs panning, Agata seems constantly determined to find new applications for his guitar. It's an undoubtedly bizarre experiment, although occasionally — on the bittersweet note-bending of "Bungy," say — the thought does occur that Agata edges closer to sounding like a hardcore Yngwie Malmsteen.

**ROBERTO ZANISI**

**GUITAR SOLI AND OTHER EXCURSIONS ON THE CUMBUS**  
ISOMAZI 101 CD

BY CLIVE HELL

Roberto Zanisi is a prolific composer of music for dance and theater in his native Italy, but his debut solo album is all about his love for 12-string guitar and that Tirsi guitar, somewhere between an Indian saz and a dobro, called a cumbu. It may resemble a Victorian bedwarmer but it has a wonderfully rich, metallic twang and all the ethereal finesse of a fine cart. I've recently heard it in the hands of the Edmonia Ensemble of The Deemed, time Mataphas Tree and Pto and singer-songwriter Lou Glandford. It's perfectly suited to Zanisi's brand of Balkan blues: the dark, muscular explosion of opener "Bogolica Geaseas," the rustic cavorting of two slide blues numbers, and the bitter solos of a Greek Ribetello medley.

Zanisi alternates the cumbu's harshness with the warmth of his 12-string, putting an eastern Mediterranean spin on the tradition of Ralph Tower and Leo Kottke. An effective melody comes from The Roaring Lions' "Jai Dev" to Green Bravado's louring "Kleider". Best of all is Zanisi's own "Nikasaki Gendou", ten minutes of meditative yet full-blooded playing.

Zanisi has a great technique, so my quibble is that he sometimes overstates his case. His gamboles-like come to the fore on two shorter pieces titled "Sona". He can't be accused of grandstanding, but if he was to follow his mentor John Fahey an extra mile, he might find his powers better served by doing less. Still, between the cumbu's anguish and the 12-string's keening sound, the pleasures of this record are clear. □

# Label Lore

## No: 096 Fonal Records

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## Run by

Sami Sanpakka and friends. Jan  
Anderén helps out, making many of the  
album covers

## Distribution

Playground Music Scandinavia, Eclipse

Records, Aquarius Records, Box Melody Bar

## Roster

Es, Kila, Kermälaist, Ystiläät, Isala,  
Ville Lämmönen, Kuusumoin, Preoetta,  
Circle, Risto, TV-Resistor, Vohvala,  
Yasara, Chamelions, Supermarket Son  
and more

## Brief history

I released a cassette compilation in  
1995 with Es, Slaughterhouse Quartet

and Kila on it. Fonal Records began when I needed a company name to put on the cover. I never planned anything, I just did what most interested me at the time. Since then all I've done has been more or less the same way. I don't scout for groups on my label, sometimes a group comes along that I see playing live somewhere or I hear something by them at my friends' houses. I've released mainly Finnish groups. On the Surround by Sun compilation there were also artists from all over the world, like Puraaka, PG Six and Scores. I'm hoping to release more foreign music but it seems Finland has so much good music that I'll never be able to get around to doing that. This year also saw the first video release, Kila: Contemporaries VHS

which is a homage to this dying format. There have been 35 releases so far varying from experimental noise pop to semi-acoustic psychedelic folk.

## Statement of intent

Peace, love, harmony

## Future plans

As Fonal has just put eight new releases out in the past few months, I will be taking a little holiday, mainly because I will be living and studying in Toronto, Canada during the autumn. Next January I will release Kermälaist Ystiläät's Lumotti Karkkupukki as a CD.

Info & manifesto: Sami Sanpakka

# Avant Rock

Reviewed by Tom Ridge

## THE BEANS

### BASSPLAYER

INTRAVENUE/INTERVERB CO.

These languorous instrumentalists from Vancouver hit a groove they don't so much run with as take a relaxed jog, limping steadily over the four lengthy tracks that make up this release. But between the grooves there's something grittier. Aligned to their insensate bass throb and interwoven guitars, augmented by occasional cello and saxophone, is an angularity that brings a gradual influence of increasing tension to bear on the otherwise relaxed atmosphere. This is particularly vivid on the percussion driven "Gelato". Meanwhile, crusty guitar and overlapping vocal samples dominate the second part of "Way Out Express". Elsewhere a worn, jazzy shuffle alternates with pasted track minimalism on "Number Four", and a stark, moodily soundtraced gives way to a steady, near-Prokofievian run on the album's closing track.

## BENDER

### RUN AROUND

LOCOLE LIMPS SINK BHPMS CO

Steve Gullick, one third of Bender, was co-creator of *Caveless* (Tilt Coats Lives), a magazine that attempted to redraw the line in the sand between 'indie' and 'experimental'. The music on *Run Around* reinforces the same cultural stance, managing to be both inward looking and vaguely antagonistic. Together with Brad Keene based artist Gerald Swaine and Galen Drunk's James Johnson, Gullick explores a kind of insular semi-isolation. Wistful melancholy, like Nick Cave on downers. But Gullick sounds down and shaggy rather than deep and measured when he sings, "Still walking/Fuck knows where/Fuck knows why", and his role-playing doesn't extend much beyond attitude. Still, the music's a fine mixture of menacing Ambient gloom and misshapen blues and soul infections. If you can get past Gullick's man in black caricature there's some compelling stuff to be found here.

## BLACKOUT BEACH

### LIGHT FLOWS THE PUTRID DAWN

SOFT ASYLUS CO

This is the solo project of Casey Meier, eccentric vocalist with Canadian outfit Frog Eyes. Here he subordinates the group's gauzy racket for a looser accompaniment of cascading acoustic guitars and keyboards, all with a slightly jolting, trebly edge. The overall impression is one of gentle claws lapping at the periphery while Mercer coos and warbles a meandering few of blank verse. He seems to be aiming for a kind of nonsense return, where the vaguest sketch of a song outline is given deeper shading by his vocal presence. Unfortunately the underlying neediness in his voice and the convenience of his lyrics, betrayed in advance by song titles like "The Schizophrenic Sings And The Fountain Dwellers Grow Apart", leave him falling well short of his ambitions. Instead his album mostly unravels over a long, 25 minutes with Mercer's quavering tones and

falsetto cries taking on a nagging air of shell-futility.

## JULIAN FANE

### SPECIAL FORCES

PLANET MU CO

Canadian auteur Julian Fane swamps his compositional skills with epic tendencies on his debut album. When he's not over-insulating his songs with layers of tinkling music box chimes and ghostly, floating melodies, he's fusing angular cleanses with industrial strength beats in an ascending rush akin to musical hysteria. And all this his voice can be fairly heard, a childlike falsetto half-tucked beneath an avalanche of sound if it's shooting for some big, unified musical statement then his own restlessness confuses the message. He fits, with unflagging energy, between extremes of expression, and slating tempos and sounds. There are occasional moments of calm contemplation amid the incendiary witness but they're all too brief. It sounds like Gōtōki on a collision course with Radiohead's *Kid A* and a John Williams soundtrack, an unholy alliance of technology, melodrama and sentimentality.

## FIRIES WERE SHOT

### SOLACE

ASPHODEL CO

Toronto Clay Walton and John Willis are based in Austin, home of Stars Of The Lid, and there are similarities to that unit's abstract quietude here in the way they extend their acoustic guitar interplay into dead, textual pieces, bolstered by loops and samples. Even their more assertive, solo acoustic moments are accompanied by the city ties of studio space. Many of Solace's tracks remain unresolved, they fade in then fade out again, as if they're sneak previews to some longer, undelivered epic in progress. Out of this transience more substantial forms emerge, but their presence is fleeting and episodic. During "Quoblaean", you can feel it when the guitars vibrato tremolo will then stretch out onto a summit of shimmering noise, and on "Sublimer", when tight, circuitous patterns overlap and fold into one another. By the album's close, the music has distilled into a septicemic haze, heading steadily towards some quiet oblivion.

## FOR STARS

### IT FALLS APART

MUNCH CO

San Francisco's For Stars hang their cosmic gladings on the framework provided by the songwriting talents of vocalist Carlos Foster. His high, clear voice drives these songs as the group fall in behind, providing a sensitive but opulent booking that stretches out but never strays too far from a melodic centre. The sound is big yet warm, confident but not arrogant, and measuring without being overly conservative. Their confidence compensates for lack of adventure, and the wide sweep of the music is grounded in the soulful clarity of Foster's voice. He leans periodically close to atmospheric AOR when left too much to his own devices, but mostly the

indicating richness and unashamed opulence of their epic space rock wins through.

## MAJOR MATT MASON USA

### BAD PEOPLE RULE THE WORLD

SHOESHINE CO

Major Matt is originally from Kansas but he has been working the NYC art-folk circuit for some years, bringing a certain old-American, smalltown quality to his adopted East Village musical persona. These songs ponder the pitfalls of bad pad Munchies, unexpected love and angerosity in the Big Apple with cheerful honesty and battered power pop squalor, somewhere between The Lemonheads and Beck. Some fuzzy alreadyness creeps in, along with Major Matt's overwaxed "goat, god, neanderthal" vocals, which lead it to see-saw between the confessing and the jaunty. If the material's unevenness lets him down, a willingness to document the banal with a self-righteous assumption of profundity makes it a refreshing collection of skewed, urban folk songs.

## MANDARIN

### PAST>FUTURE>PRESENT

BELLA UNION CO

Heavy on the basslines with sharply drawn guitar patterns, the venerated funkiness of Mandarin, from Denton, Texas, is topped off with Jason Wortham's jazzy-assured vocals. A scattering of influences have been attained into tightly focused songs, with a keen sense of melody and an impressive grasp of agitated, Gang Of Four-style rhythms, the group's combustible energy is released in sharp bursts of activity, with their supple compactness allowing for an intense overspill of shredded, overdriven rock noise. The surface activity belies a robust understanding and adaptation of more traditional blues and soul-derived dynamics, which are more overtly expressed on the subtitled closing track, "The Gift Of Not Living".

## NEUROSIS

### THE EYE OF EVERY STORM

RELAPSE CO

Neurosis cover stars them the Bay Area, Neurosis combine Industrial aggression with Wegenerian blues and a touch of dazed down, psychadelic blues. Steve Alvin's receding insects to a fair amount of low-end fire into the group's sound, and the riffs have a satisfying sense of heavy inevitability, but the group's protestations of adventurousness don't really stand up to scrutiny. For most of the time Neurosis sound like classic Metal's sham of its softer qualities, but with Neurosis's very own longueurs replacing the genre's more traditional excesses. Consistency is not a virtue in their vocabulary – everything goes on and on far too long. Though it's peppered throughout with guitar interludes and polyrhythmic c diversions, these fail to amount to much more than breathers before the return of more epic Metal-blister Blues. still, despite an overall air of busyness, the production lacks a killer edge of aggressiveness when it's most needed. One track,

"Bridges", does find the group deconstructing their own sound with interesting results, but it's not enough to raise the album above the ordinary.

## SIGNER

### THE NEW FACE OF SMILING

CARPKIN CO

New Zealander Beau Smith takes My Bloody Valentine's weightless, abstract guitar blueprint and adds on some noisy glitch electronics to create songs and mini-soundscapes shaped to a large degree by a miasma of ascendancy and self-subjugation. Where there are vocals they're buried in the mix, murmur caught in the turbulent wake of undulating, distorted guitars. Smith also allows his music space in which to shimmer, creating bittersweet passages where howling fuzz holds an underlying promise of violence. The electronic jolts, ruptures and jump-cuts add texture and unpredictability, but never undermine this sense of identity bringing these elements together. Like MBV, Smith creates a kind of dissonance beauty, but his music is less of an ecstatic sprawl and more a series of ominous tremors and small explosions.

## SWISS GUARDS

### ONCE THE PROCESS

CARPKIN CO

Newcomers Adam Turner and Dore Utton began Swiss Guards as a punk, a fiction around which they constructed profiles, interviews, etc. Now they've transitioned over from the virtual realm into the real world with a collection of rough-edged, bouncy songs that has then sounding like a sardonic Medem Lovers with a large dose of northern grit. At their best they're an amazingly droll variant on lo-fi rock art, in that they attempt to have their cake and eat it too with their deadpan take on rock 'n' roll basics' "Inyo", "Hospital List #1" and "Simple Pleasures" all spark with raw energy. It only comes undone when they start to sound bored with themselves and you sense that they feel too superior to their own material. At worst they sound like Mark E Smith fronting a series of Oasis dancos, which, of course, may be the point of the whole exercise.

## SHUGO TOKUMARU

### NIGHT PIECE

MUSIC RELATED CO

Tokyo musician Shugo Tokumaru sounds, initially, like Deverend Benson's country croon, playing his acoustic guitar and singing with a gentle, whimsical voice to the accompaniment of birdsong. If there's a large dollop of twee happy navelism in Night Piece, there's also a much more gnawing gong. Tokumaru frequently plucks his guitar strings with a blunt, persistent insistence, which lends the sound an exposed quality at odds with the generally mellow mood of the album. He fits between styles, from gently kiling acoustic melodies to hazy psych-folk drones and jaunty acoustic jazz. It's a compact but eccentric collection with an unexpected depth and charm, which ultimately wins out over its faux nerf surface qualities. □

# Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

## CRAZY GIRL

CRAZY GIRL

DC RECORDINGS 2X12"

I have doubts about the sustainability of the 'all retro, all the time' attitude that epitomizes the club zeitgeist these days, and this pair of tracks from London vocalist Crazy Girl – Tam Tiff McNamee, known from Maurice Fulton's "My Gaglo" and a cover of Dan Seimens' "Extra Ordinary" – certainly doesn't escape the anxiety of influence. "Bad Ass Reputation", produced by Chicken Lips, advertises its debt to Tam Tam via big neon letters, from the chicken scratching to the ollas bass; the chorus, which pairs staccato keyboards with Crazy Girl's harmonised "Talk talk talk" is almost as directly descended from "Woolly Rappenehead" as Chicks On Speed's cover from earlier this year. Still, in their lab version, Chicken Lips prove they know their way around an oldie machine, turning out snare drums as burly and bawling as powder neffins. The Depth Charge-produced "Play At Your Own Risk", meanwhile, sounds uncannily like Depeche Mode's mid-'80s Mania electro tune "Joy The 'D Down" – the synthesizer riff plays in such perfect complementary harmony to the predecessor's melody you wonder if it's intentional.

## DIZZEE RASCAL

STAND UP TALL

XL 12"

In the same way that the principal pleasure of Ruben Fleischer's video for Dizzee Rascal's new single is to be found not in the well worn trope of a rapper holding court in a strip club, but either in the warm, supple lighting, the real pleasures of Dizzee's new single hang deep in the details. Driven by an enormous beat bashing with hi-hats and handclaps, more electro-Techno than the half-speed, giddy rhythms of Say In Da Corner, "Stand Up Tall" nevertheless holds a delay behind the bold, brassy entrance. The track's lead off, hung on a harmonic separation by three or four octaves, whirs and whines like a hydraulic motor, throwing off tiny sparks that seismic quality gives the track much of its impact – it's less something you hear than something you feel in your belly or the hairs on your neck. Dizzee's delivery – turning simple words into digraphs, even trigraphs, and carving consonants into whittled-down splinters – is far more engaging than his words.

## FILASTINE

JUDAS GOAT

BONN 12"

After a year long hiatus, DJ Nujabes' Sosol label returns with two tracks from a first album named *Filastine*. Almost certainly the only record ever to have been recorded on location in Seattle, Marakech, and Rio De Janeiro, it's also probably the only record you'll hear this year to fuse standup bass, Middle Eastern drumming, reeds of Middle Eastern or North African provenance, and French lyrics. "Judas Goat" plays live hand drumming off chopped tracks in classic reggae/jungle style, the pauses and accelerations in both the live and programmed drums feel like

time itself has been sliced open, offering a cross-section of temporality's complex and relative clockwork, with gears spinning at multiple speeds. "Palmares" uses Spanish horns, shuffling drumming, stompbox bass, Eastern strings, and female vocals in French to create something like Fourth World Acid Jazz with a decidedly minimalist bent.

## FRIVOLOUS

### SOMEWHERE IN THE SUBURBS

KARLOVSKY CD

An unusual kind of listen permeates Frivolous's sampler-like disc if the standard approach to 50 samples and library sounds and all manner of recorded quirk could be compared to, say, a collage made out of black velvet paintings – that is, tapping only the most obvious hallmarks of camp – Frivolous's sense, replete with puns, are more like Gregory Crewdson's scene, hyperreal photographs of Disney-like backyards, teaming with stuffed animals and robes and sharp-eared jockstraps. There's too much detail for any one element's cheekiness to stand out. Instead, when added together, all the potentially dubious components – deadpan vocal speed up Chipmunk-style, organ organ chords, Acid squiggles, noisily lounge drags – create a strongly monophonic effect, sweet and eager to please.

## TOMAS JIRKU

ZAXXON EP

SUPERMATERIAL 12"

Zixxus was a 1982 Segi arcade game, and it would be easy to believe that Martíns's Jirku used the bright blue 3D spaceship adventure as the sole sound source for his three tracks. Here they're as blippy and brittle and elegantly lit-as, well, a 1982 arcade game. But there's a rhythmic sophistication here that goes beyond mere 8-bit electronic music. Jirku's primary inspiration seems to be Kerepak's guitar minimalism and the crackly dampness of Wolfgang Voigt's Freiland records, so his pockmarked rhythms roll down in patterns that taggle effortlessly between 4/4 and Schäufel beats, at times overlapping each other, filling in empty spaces with erratic syncopations that refuse to fit into any hierarchy. There's also a hint of Robag Wurra's endless internal bifurcations, beats splitting into beacons of beacons of beacons – but where Wurra's music is as clean as a vacuum-packed circuit board, this is all burned rubber and toasted silicon glowing red.

## MATHEW JONSON

### DECOMPRESSION EP

MIMUS 12"

Vancouver, BC's Mathew Jonson is the latest example of that breed of wunderkind that seems to appear out of nowhere to be suddenly, well, everywhere. His track "Typhonose", for Vancouver's Isolantes label, appeared on both DJ Koze's All People Is My Friends and Ricardo Villalobos' Take It Like It Is. Swigocki lauded his "Frigid Extreme" for *Arionz* 22; he even remixed Kelly Furtado for

DreamWorks back in 2001. Two new singles for Isolantes and Sub Stone show Jonson to be an adept student of Detroitish electro Techno, lacing up 808 patterns with gesayi arpeggios, but it's his staggeringly Narcotic "Decompression" that really validates his rep. Unseen, cut out of tame figures fit about the upper register, imparting a tarnished soi-là edge, while a gummy minor-key melody follows the track – like a whipping, half-opened parasite – as it plummets to earth. The whole thing feels like a vision of Techno gone Heavy Metal, cushioned by delay but no less brutal.

## KELPE

### SEA INSIDE BODY

DC RECORDINGS CD

On his first album, Kel McKeown's influences shimmer as brightly as his frozen mercury beads and desophine synth leads you hear Paul playing the chimes, Boards Of Canada howking spookily childishly nostalgic, Prefuse and Vibian arm wrestling over the proper glock-to-Acid mix for post-digital whiteboy HipHop, and even a hint of Two Lane Swede in the persistent aqueous meander of the album and song titles. Yet this is one of the most engrossing albums in recent electronic music. As a designer, scavenger, and arranger of addidle little sounds – things that when part spurt, gleam, melt, peal – McKeown is easily equal to his mentors. Just listen to the dinging "Growth", an incidental track that encompasses all the harmonic sprawl of a Phil Niblock recording into under two minutes. We time lapse footage of an entire season. As a songwriter, he's no slouch either, capable of twisting the quietly mindblowing sonics into neat little interlocking structures that suggest far more than they ever say.

## K-ROCK

EP2

REHUX 12"

Riphique may call their style "Brindisance", but when you peek that brain apart, you're generally likely to find a huge ever growing pinwheel of that rules from the centre of the raw world. Riphique likes to throw down, and they like to do it in the thickback style. And K-Rock, who we're told "entered his professional writing career as a dancer for Baby Ford", is obviously Old Skool on an array on the label, Southern Hush Hop samples, breakbeats, Adonis and the glittering pads of vintage Detroit Techno. Still, it's not really vintage or retro; K-Rock's dark, clattering, paranoid personae are anachronistic in the best sense, existing just outside linear time as they thought you knew it. He's smooth, too – one moment he's crafting hyper-efficient darkside drum 'n' bass, and the next he's lighting fiss in his groovebox and making melodies of their death throes.

## MRI OIZO

### STUNT

MUTE 12"

At long last, Mr Oizo – best known for his gaudy, electro-Techno anthem "Flat Beat", used for a 1999 L'Oréal commercial, and last heard with

2000's "Last Night A DJ Saved My Dog" – is back, just in time to catch the rising crest of Paris's new wave of Technotec producers, which anticipates Oizo's forthcoming album, featuring the same kind of powder dry machine drumming, but instead of the lazy Acid-edged low end of his classic productions, it favours relentless, double time arpeggios as shift and instant as a dentist's drill. (In fact, there's almost no bass here at all.) Barreling along at a frantic 147 bpm, the electro-flavoured tune has little time for Oizo's usual sense of humor, usually embedded in raspberries and disintegrating textures, but he does throw in a trick toward the end of the track when the beat intersects itself, jumping in on three and leaving the song to a singin' off, confused and running from its own tail.

## MIKE SHANNON

SUBLET EP

LOGIC 12"

I've always preferred Mike Shannon's rhythms to his choice of sounds. Even at their grittest, the scraps of tone and texture that have made up the rhythmic blocks of his joking, shimmery funk have seemed oddly lifeless, possibly a consequence of a reliance on software over hardware. But Shannon must have spilled a six pack of Dr Pepper in his keyboard, followed up with a fistful of tapas, because the sounds on his new 12" for Persian label Logic are the dirtiest, stickiest, messiest set of tones he's ever used. In the title track, a souring mass of cricket crabs through drying mudholes and shanks to shake off the caked on grime; it's a mess of flepping wigs and mirey filth. "Suspicion" keeps up the infected obsessives, but this time playing Discovery Channel with ants, dry leaves, and broken glass rhythmically. Shannon's never been more captivating – each bar subdivides exponentially until the effect is like watching the night sky from a mountaintop. Focus on one point of light and your peripheral vision fills with pinpricks; shift your gaze and they disappear; and a host of new ghost details take their place in the surrounding blankness.

## TERRESTRE

SECONDARY INSPECTION

SHATIC DBC009 CD

Tejan's Fernando Corone is best known as a teardrop, reconfiguring samples of compositions like Morton Feldman and Aria Part. Terreste, however, sticks to samples sourced closer to home, utilizing regional drum, guitars and cowbells that alternately ride the beat and interrupt it, bawling unceasingly like a ranch goat slaving away. Despite the ethnomusicological conceit, Terreste's music is free of the Latin clichés that typically plague hybridized House. Despite the rockin' following motion, an air of mystery permeates the music. Tonics are stretched out into great lateral sheets that loom like swing blankets. But Corone's nimble touch keeps the heftiness at bay: his drums flip like pinball flippers, leaving the music the air of a game played obsessively by scowling figures in the back of a dingy bar. □

# Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

## DENNIS BROWN PRESENTS

### PRINCE JAMMY

UMOJA/20TH CENTURY

DUBWISE

BLOOD AND FIRE CD

Here's a collection of two albums first released in the late 1970s on DEB, the label that the late Dennis Brown ran in the UK with the help of his friend Castro Brown. Of the two, 20th Century Dubwise is the more celebrated and certainly the tougher set. The then Prince Jammy is in particularly fierce form, clearly septupling a new style from King Tubbys' more classic, inventive and at times jazz approach. In the end, the earlier album, released as Umoja Love & Unity (not to be confused with the Augustus Pablo album of a similar title) emerges as a blueprint for what was to become the UK no roots style of the 80s that also developed under the influence of Jam Shaka.

Umoja has more bass онset whereas Dubwise is hardcore drum 'n' bass. Moody versions of Dennis Brown staples of the time, there are also mixes of tunes from Lennox Brown, Junior Delgado and The Tonins. This represents Jammy at the height of his powers.

## THE BUG & WARRIOR QUEEN

### AKTION PAK

REPHLEX CD012

Kevin Martin aka The Bug threw the dice – now other young DJs are queuing for their turn at the table, throwing down even more fucked up beats. Still, even in his previous incarnations, Martin was a master of taking it to the edge – and it's on this way he stays with the introduction of ruff style Werner Queen aka Wendy Culture, a prominent figure in sound system clashes across the UK.

The rhythms on the six bonus dubs that like a four pound wimp banging against the side of a pomelo, trying to escape the nose cramping from the mutant Casio keyboard echoing in the bowl. In its own way, this is all the English as an Ealing comedy especially Martin's studied Bug pensra. Perhaps Mark E Smith needs drafting in for vocals next time.

## IAHMAN LEVI

### I AM A LEVI (EXTENDED)/PART 2

BAKING REFLUX 12"

Trevor Sutherland first recorded as Youth for producer Duke Reid back in the early 1960s, only becoming Iahman Levi around ten years later after trips back and forth between JA and the UK, I Am A Levi was recorded in 1975 in London's Goossenberry Studios and rerecorded for Haili / Hyatt, his debut Island set that soon became a homegrown classic, a roots-style *Astral Weeks*.

The original version, although opening up as a meditative cut, turns out to be a much more serious affair, sounding like Einstürzende Neubauten have assumed control of the dubbing, with enormous crashing metallic chugs zooming unpredictably into the mix. At the end of the three mixes, each one progressively more testing, taking off headphones has the same physical effect as stepping off a rollercoaster.

## JUNIOR DAN

### EAST OF THE RIVER COBRE/VERSION

HONEST JONS 10"

A quick follow up to "Look Out For The Devil", "East Of The River Cobre" further signals a revival of interest in this neglected artist. As always the geographical details are as seductive as the tune. We leave the River Cobre runs from St Catherine through Stilgeville and on to Spanish Town, reading the sea at Brayan by Tryall Heights, in turn giving name to the Hi Tryall label on which the record was first released. Mixed at Joe Gibbs Studios, it has one of those naggling melodic tunes that's obviously not Pablo and therefore a desirable stamp, given his relative domination of the instrument, delivered over a choppier percussive bed with more space in the lesson.

## LOVE GROCER MEETS BUSH CHEMIST

### EAST OF JARO/JARO DUB

CONSCIOUS SOUNDS 10"

Love Grocer is a musical collaboration revolving around the songwriting duo of Chris Peter on trombone, keyboards and bass, and David Fulwood on trumpet and guitar, whose two albums have been heartily recommended in this column. As the Crispy Horns brass section, they have worked with a veritable who's who of British reggae, and their tunes have recently been picked up by none other than the mighty Shabba.

Here they meet Bush Chemist, aka Duage Wendor of Conscious Sounds Studios, and together they come up with a prime roots instruments and dub on top of a languorous bhang-style rhythm track. It's reminiscent of those lovely old Banga Herman tunes but this time with instantly recognisable horns that, unlike you want to sit back with a cool can of Red Stripe rolling across your brow.

## MILANESE

### 1UP

VOUCHER 12"

I've not checked out horroflick Freddy Vs Jason yet, but at a guess these tracks from Chris Ciani as Milaneze may make up for that. 1UP meets the expectations of what we all thought Aesop Empire might sound like if he was really such as big fan of Lee Perry. The lyrics of "Malechic X" need a bounding ball software upgrade on the iPod, but it's clearly a shotgun wedding of Mark Stewart during his Mafia era and the throaty Buju Banton.

Squatches of blurry ragga vocal lines smear the surface of the Junglest disruptions of "Se Melobelle", and by the time "Iceman" comes up it does not noise as we know it. Rather, it's a Bush Street kids vs Whitehouse clash, while "Head Boos" gervenly displays disturbing creptoriental intentions for a closing track. It's as if just in case we didn't really appreciate the swift, passage through the sonic tunnels of Industrial, Jungle and Gabba – now we must endure flashbacks like this.

## THE ROYALS

### DUBBING WITH THE ROYALS

PURE SOUND/BEATBACK CD010LP

Roy Cousins was another student at Studio One, where he cut the first version of his most famous tune, "Pick Up The Pieces". In 1972 he set up his Tamaki label, later Tamaki-Warriah And Dove, in an attempt to control his own product. Running both a post office in Spanish Town and a series of jukebox operators helped keep things together until the success of a Pick Up The Pieces compilation eased him back into the business. Here he nurtured the talents of artists like Charlie Chaplin, Earl Sixteen, Cornell Campbell and The Meditations.

Apart from a couple of super rare 10" versions from Prince Far I and I Roy, this dubwise set is an excellent companion to the previous Royals release on Pressure Sounds, also titled Pick Up The Pieces, with dub versions from heavyweights Tubby, Jammy, Skandal, La Ponry and Ernest T at the mixing board.

## EARL SIXTEEN

### SOLDIER OF JAH ARMY

PAINTS CD

Earl Sixteen is best known for his work with Dreadzone, Monieskin, Rockerskin and (leftfield), who scored a massive dance hit with his vocal assistance back in the early 90s. But his pedigree stretches back to the 70s when he recorded an impressive series of sides with producers Lee Perry, Milkey Dread, Augustus Pablo, Linval Thompson and Coxsone Dodd, among others. Allowing us a glimpse at those earlier days, the set includes his version of "Malechic X", originally cut for Joe Gibbs and used as a demo for Dennis Brown's hit version from his great Visions album, plus "Rasaman", a tune cut for Pablo here with the dub. It also features five more doses, including the eight minute epic "Going To Africa". All sticky roots and culture but this is the place to head if you cannot bag his Studi One Showtime.

## SUPER T

### WEST BOUND D TRAIN

WACKIES 10"

The original guitar funk opening Dennis Brown's version of "West Bound D Train" was lifted by The Observer from Willie Mitchell's production of Al Green's "Love And Happiness". On the echo, Brown's lyrics are usurped by the come and goin Super T, once a Kingston Time World cop with a reputation as bad as that of other lawmen Duke Reid. Here, he runs the D train from Ippisup to Wackies territory in that deeply insipid sub-Soul-style typical of Lloyd Barnard's mix of the time. The flip Iffs the mood, as "Style And Fashion" are celebrated in a combination style by knockabout MCs Jah Battah and Sleeter.

## VARIOUS

### STEPPIN' UP EP

MOTION 10" EP

The first of two 10" showcasing tough dancers paving the way for the album Out On Funky Tip, with funk, soul and dub all laced from Clive Chin, of Randy's fame. An artist who is now

getting more recognition is guitarist Lyn Taitt, featured here on the JB's style "Steppin' Up". With Tools & The Maytals it's more of a Memphis groove on the see dub "Who Knows Better (Version)". Jelloskri rebrands Nervous Disease's "Soil Nakoso" in what surprisingly emerges as a lighter, almost showbiz version of the original. A peculiar choice for closer is Jimmy Landon's take on The Everly Brothers' "Cathy's Gown".

## VARIOUS

### STEPPIN' THE NEIGHBOURS: JAPANESE MEETS DREADBEATS

FOR LIFE MUSIC CD

Picked up for next to nothing as a Japanese cutout in a dubious Sepong back-of-the-shop operation, this is the kind of music that won't reach the West because the rods credentials don't ring that red, green and gold flashing credibility indicator. However, as a sample of reggae pop ecstasy executed to perfection, it would be difficult to better. As Spinnna B-Hill and The Covenants (and scat through "Boogie Walk" and The Cool Wise Men (with Monoleo Bitto on vocals) sweetly murder Erroll Garner's "Misty" in a ska-style, one can only stay to spend it right at the club where all these guys gig it all played with gobsmacking businesness, with tongues numbers near cheeks.

## VARIOUS

### STUDIO ONE CLASSICS SOUL JAZZ CD01012"

This must be a case of Soul Jazz taking breath before issuing a Studio One reissues and unreleased tracks album. It comprises some killer fits from start to end, with vocals, harmony groups, DJs, instrumental duels and no surprises at all. Still, it's nice to hear clean takes of tunes I've never heard without hiss and pop, especially Jacobo's "School" – even though he steals the motorboat intro from John Youth's "80 Skank". Meanwhile, Lone Ranger also takes inspiration from that elder DJ on "Automatic", quoting The Last Poets. Recommended for Studio One novices and as a great party album.

## X PROJECT

### JAH SET IT/GHETTO GEDDON

NATTY CONGO 12"

Defining back to around 1992, this Robot MC Bass Project production disappeared from view so quickly it's a moot point as to whether it was visible in the first place. Still, it possesses that irresistible mix of ferocity and cloying sweeteness to be found on most of the London produced reggae influenced Jungle from the period.

It's one of a slew of 12" releases currently available which together form what is now understood as the prototype strain of Junglestic drum 'n' bass: all the dubs are half speed yet still sound ahead of the pack. Also sound at the moment is the previously unreleased "Banana Boat Man", featuring Junior Reid and SuperCat, as well as the unbelievable "Walking In The Air", which does indeed audaciously sample that tune from The Smurfs. □

# Electronica

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

## AM-BOY

CLAYTON'S HIDEOUT

WORMHEAD LP

The follow-up to former Wolf's debut, *Fondien*, starts with about a nanosecond of pitches, just enough to let your heart sink in anticipation of, you know, the usual, when tatty breakbeats cut into your gathering funk. The fun doesn't even stop there, though. Suddenly the speakers are filled with wispy retro-fitted keyboards playing the kind of melodies that would normally have you praying to the aliens. After that, it's all chimes, descending scales and a gradual decrescendo of tempos to the Ambient closer "Space Elevator" and "Splice". Sounds like it could have been recorded any time in the last 30 years and comes on vinyl only.

## COHERENT ENCOHERENCE WILL A COMPUTER GIVE YOU KIDS?

RECOMBINATIONS CD

## SPLATT WORLD OF SPLATT

RECOMBINATIONS CD

Founded by Jon Nelson off the back of his tape collage project *Escape Mechanism* and his syndicated radio show *Some Assembly Required*, Recombinations is dedicated to releasing the work of those taking the art of the mixtape by the throat and dragging it to the next level. The results are a heady amalgam of Henry Jacobs' *Music And Film* bootlegs from the 1990s with Norwegian's predatory cut-ups and Neptunes' radical re-shuffling妙。 This is a culture hacking effused with attention deficit disorder. More one anger and another instantly takes its place. Keith and Nick Head, aka Coherent Encoherence, manipulate Denney's seven diversions into sounding like a bunch of cheery gangster pricks, obsessively repeating the word "no"; while Splatt venomously crossbreeds Alka-Seltzer's "pink, a link, fizz" with the sweaty charm of the Texan Man.

## BJ COLE TROUBLE IN PARADISE

COOKING VINYL LP

The athenaeous get hotter and dizzier as the dog days seem to go on; however, you sick of only wearing white until Labour Day, and you have to eat one more plate of BBQ you're gonna barf. Not to worry, Vernon Braith wait stand guitarist BJ Cole has created the soundtrack to the best summer you never had. Still pleasantly giddy from his 2000 collaboration with Luke Vibert for *Cooking Vinyl*, *Stop The Rain*, Cole has put together a dreamy collection of one-off tracks recorded with the likes of Tush Palace, Bent and Alabama 3. Guy Jackson and Neil Cointi regulars on Cole's *Transparent Music* releases, are also present, while Vibert returns with the seafaring bluegrass plies of "Surf And Headover", which is everything the title says it will be, plus a little more besides. But avoid for most outstanding moment goes to "Beautifull", featuring Groove Armada and the voice of actor Victor Banerji, who played the really scary one in *What Ever Happened To Baby Jane?*

## JACK DANGERS FORBIDDEN PLANET EXPLORED

IMPORTANT 2XCD

"Do you understand the mechanism?" reads an enigmatic note on the two CD release, a line of dialogue from MGM's 1956 sci-fi classic *Forbidden Planet* to which the comic reply is, of course "No, Murbis, a simple blaster". Which begs the question: does Dangers? Probably not, judging by this rather confused presentation. Recorded live at a screening of the film during the IDEAL festival in Nantes this year, a selection of material taken from Dangers's new soundtrack has been bended and twisted to duplicate exactly the toads on Bebe and Louis Barron's original soundtrack.

It's a bold move that doesn't so much invite comparison with their groundbreaking electronic score as static on a clear and demand it. Unfortunately, the Meant Beat Manifesto frontman has neither the wit nor the invention to pull it off. The second CD, containing a selection of sci-fi sound effects, created on his room sized Synth 100 synthesizer, supplies a relatively engaging, if pointless palliative.

## DISCO OPERATING SYSTEM ULTRASONIC BATH

LOTA CONTINUA CD

## ILLUMINATI OCEAN ALMANAC

LOTA CONTINUA CD

Like Recombinations, Lotta Continua is another start-up label with the clean-dey-ed confidence to back a couple of other artists into their catalogue numbers, and it's hard not to love them for it. There's a certain purity to the way these first two releases come packaged in a uniform edition, featuring as they do the work of individuals with an existing track record. Gareth Bibby, aka Disco Operating System, follows up his debut album *You Don't Have To Work Here To Be Mad* with a neatly segmented flow of thoughtful electronic abstractions that make a good play for your attention. With Ocean Almanac, Dave Clarkson, aka Illuminati, heads into choppier waters than his *Searching For The New Land*.

Things are kept taut and tense on this voyage, except for the breezily buoyant "Boules à Frozen Island", featuring WLR Clarkson on vibraphone; this is about the viscerates of merriment. "Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore," runs the couplet from a Shakespeare sonnet quoted in the sleeve notes, "so do our minutes hasten to their end". Head's to the nest of Lotta Continua's first 100 releases.

## KAMMERFLIMMER KOLLEKTIEF HYSTÉRIA

CUCKOLSLIVER CD

Expanded from its original 30 minute running time, the third release from Weilheim's Kammerflimmer Kollektief (*Shrimping Collective*) now comes heavily burdened with a weightier extended version of the formerly short and hitherto evanescent composition, "Du Sehst

Hoch Du Sehst" "Wollen". But then, expansion has always been a problem where these guys are concerned.

Started by Thomas Weber as a one man project exploring electroacoustic interactions between conventional instrumentation, ambient recordings and digital manipulation, it has grown over the years into an ensemble whose group playing often detracts from – and dissipates – Weber's subtler intentions, as evidenced on solo pieces like "Engel Woch". Use it or lose it would seem to be the lesson here.

## OPTO 2ND

HOTBY INDUSTRIES CD

An example of how software turns process into narrative. The starting point for Carsten Nicolai's second collaboration with Thomas Knak was a batch of feedbacks found in a forest outside Berlin containing almost inaudible recordings of someone playing the guitar. Nicolai had the sound source digitally cleaned up and sent the files on to Knak in Denmark, who worked in loops, beats and rhythms, adding additional woodland sounds.

The results were then passed back and forth between the two artists over the next 24 hours, the time reference given as the title for each individual piece echoing this period of intense activity. Narrative, as these sonorous compositions reveal, functions best as a structured series of shifting perspectives.

## PANDATONE LEMONS AND LIMES

NEGO GLAM CD

New York's Inner Space goes all pastoral, the way only a city dweller can, composing a series of wondrous songs for his acoustic guitar and then fragmenting them across the board into a

collection of tiny oscillations. Expressing a joy that can only be found in the kind of artificially controlled environments where nature is a vile outcast, and ants are busy chewing through the wiring, Lemons And Limes has its moments of wobbly-gritty "Delognized" and "Go It!" diane and reverberante in neat sequence with each other. "Ratika Sounds" and "Stat" evoke pyre of shrilling temps, while "Bunen" broods and rumbles, and "Broadwalk" settles into a melancholy pop groove. Welcome to the great indoors.

## SETI & SI\_COMM PROBE

WVO CD

"Marked became infatuated with the discovery of DNA" is the stark declaration repeated across the handsewn gatefold sleeve for this collaborative project from electronic artists Andrew Lagowski and Baz Nichols. What sort of leaves you wondering why, if that's true, there are still so many databases wandering around downtown.

Using as its inspiration an obscure NASA memorandum dating from the 1960s, which proposed that man could be engineered for space rather than the other way round, Probe

seeks to link software with hardware as it engineers a series of complex conceptual pathways towards the "post-human". Like Deepchord's recent *Lunar Accelerator*, it creates intricate events out of bold and clear thinking.

## 65DAYSOFSTATIC THE FALL OF MATH

MONITORING CD

The future, as Sheffield free press 65daysofstatic are only too aware, is not transmitted, it's received, even when the signal is nothing but noise. While waiting for the block to clear, however, they trace pictures of apocalyptic grandeur out of dense audio scribble. A breakneck descent into electronically rendered sheet metal guitar, rattling drum 'n' bass and – you know we want them – Pring keyboards means that, like in moments of intense ending, there's never a dull moment. Cities are laid waste, warbird bands fly loops, but on their own words end, when 65dos tell you "this cat is a lamachine", you'd better believe it's true.

## SLICKER WE ALL HAVE A PLAN

HEFTY CD

Listening to the third album from John Hughes, responsible for the soundtrack to *Asia Argento's 2002 flick Scarlet Daze*, is a bit like finding yourself in an old neighbourhood that you thought had been torn down long ago but is evidently still standing. The bands are crap and to the point, the words from great voices Kiedis Army and Calista's Lindsay Anderson have a beat-up charm to them.

The vibe is easy and urban, like a tree growing out of a sidewalk, especially on the syncopated bleeping and kospred woodwind of "Village Dub Plate", and the Latino lurch of "A Strong Danzer". You can't quite figure out how it's all survived for so long but you're certainly glad it did.

## YESTERDAY'S HEROES

1979

LA LOUCHE CD

Unhappy the music that needs heroes, to paraphrase Bertolt Brecht, for there will not be a stadium venue large enough to contain its bloated footnotes. If Team Themeritz and Haco seem a little mired trying to remember the final year in a decade long since past, it's probably because they're still busy washing the taras out of their eyes. Punk had thrown in the towel, the way it was always going to, Themeritz went straight into number ten with a bullet, the Republican right was rising from the grave, and Men Without Hats said "No Dancing", the song being included here as track number 79, after 82 undeniably tasks each containing four seconds of silence apiece. You do the math. Wissimo, devastated and steady by turns, Themeritz and Haco's delicate compositions remind us that it's always the strong who are brought to their knees. □

# Global

Reviewed by Clive Bell

**ROSS DALY**  
MICROCOSMOS  
L'EMPREINTE DIGITALE CO

Ross Daly has lived on Crete for most of his life, singlemindedly reviving the musical voice of the bowed Cretan lyra, and incorporating it into cosmopolitan musical gatherings. Microcosmos is a kind of traditional instrumentalists' supergroup, featuring Daly's long-term sparring partner Bijan Cherati on Iranian drums and top-notch young kora player Balaké Sissoko. Daly himself switches from lyra to oud, and even Afghan rebab, and there are cameos from the mellifluous ney flute of Hesha Lamteek and percussionist Pedro Estuvam, moonlighting from Early Music specialists The Ensemble Hassoun. They bring a relaxed but highly contemporary feel to Daly's own compositions and three of Sissoko's Nakon tunes. It's a descriptively melodic, connective style, but still an hour and a quarter of playing at the highest standard.

**FESTIVAL GNAOUA  
ESSAOUIRA**  
LIVE EDITION 2003  
NOCTURNE CD

The Gnouas are a Moroccan milleniae-old brotherhood descended from slaves, preserving sal-Saharan spirit and healing ceremonies. Their dark music is call-and-response chanting over troncoony metal castanets and a fiercely strack acoustic bass guitar called a gimbë. Having believed for years that this was some kind of grossly hot noise played by crazy people, Moroccans have woken up to the fact that everyone else loves it, and have started an annual festival at Essaouira to celebrate. This is not undiluted good news for those who liked Gnoua music as it was. The opening track confirms one's suspicions, as a giggle of loquacious French meddlers on sax, violin and piano remount Gnoua as a sub-gem of madmen jazz.

After this classic slice of festival vacuousness things improve, with stirring performances, using simply the basic line-up, from Willian and Hamid El Kass, Moroccan groups Ahsra, Kanidha and Jara point to a bright future for Gnoua music, borrowing Western elements without diluting its original power. Jeanne adi

powerful drumming to the mix, suddenly working the audience into a frenzy.

**KULTUR SHOCK**  
KULTURAD-DIKTATURA  
KODAKARROW CD

"Just from gekko!" reads Gino Vevdjewich at the top of this exhilarating bonkers album, and later, "Remorse, communists, Zapata, folklorists!" as Balkan stylings are swept aside by a tussle of Metal guitar and drums. Kultur Shock's ability to get laid over the political ramifications of an ice cream made them as auxiliaries of California/Armenian Neo-Metal maniacs System D/A Down, who have gone public with their enthusiasm for the group. Former Yugoslavian pop star Vevdjewich founded Kultur Shock in Seattle in 1998, with other members from Croatia, Bulgaria and Japan, plus avant garde Amy Denio on sax and doctored Vevdjewich as a bon emcee of many voices, even diving into parody of some ultra-heavy Balkan ballads, while rock-solid guitar and drums ensure this is heavyweight music with a giddy flavour rather than West Coast whimsy. Produced by Faith No More's Billy Gould, and hectically magnified.

**SHIYANI NGOCBO:  
MASKANDA FROM SOUTH  
AFRICA**  
INTRODUCING  
WORLD MUSIC NETWORK INTRO CD

Feegeed Zulu traditional music played with down-home verve by acoustic guitarist Shiyani Ngoco, with help from bass guitar, violin and congaes. Maskanda is a musical dance style characterised by fast, repetitive, single-note guitar plucking, creating a stamping swing that uplifts the spirit. Ex-3Wastafel producer Ben Maselane resists the temptation to commercialise the sound with sequenced drums, instead placing microphones near the musicians' feet. This is a Durban studio recording that decamped out onto the town, a laudie "Athens For The Elders" is four "cappella" singers around a microphone, while a flock of squawking birds add colour to "Binyenzekiso" (The Tears). Ngoco, now in his early 50s, sings and plays up a storm, and the sound of the receding could hardly be

bettered. Maselane's amusing sleeve-note essay is in itself virtually a beginners' handbook for would-be record producers.

**ORCHESTRA OF THE  
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR  
KOREAN PERFORMING ARTS**  
YOMILAK: KOREAN CLASSICAL  
MUSIC  
EDITION 82 2XCD

Edition 82, home of recordings by Akira Suzuki, Christine Kubisch and Giacomo Sestini, has released this bumper dozen of Korean court music. Blazing choirs and bowed zithers lead the Orchestra of the National Centre For Korean Performing Arts. This is gloriously paced music of medieval grandeur, embodying Confucian decorum. "Hyeolleung (Pleasure With The People)" spreads its seven movements over 80 minutes, and was originally performed in 1447. Three shorter pieces from the court repertoire are included; "Soltwa Chigun" allows us to hear the tuned bronze bells and stone chimes erupting in China.

**ARSENIO RODRIGUEZ**  
AL REY DEL SON MONTUNO  
RICO CD

1940s blind bandleader Arsenio Rodriguez was the father of the modern Afro-Cuban sound, using paired trumpets, piano and Rodriguez's own tree guitar. His grandfather was a saino, giving Rodriguez a direct family link to Congolese rumba traditions. He took the foundations of salsa when in 1950 he moved to New York for a short stint, but this collection showcases Rodriguez's 1940s work in Havana, with just four tracks at the end highlighting his brother New York sound. Rodriguez was a prolific composer, and there are plenty of his trademark son montuno (milindapalo) melody followed by call-and-response interplay and instrumental display, plus his melancholy bolero ballads. Slightly enlivened piano solos by Eli Manzini add to the charm. Composer and writer of the excellent sleeve notes is journalist and samba producer Karunesh Tarkash. These are great tunes, and New York guitarist Mark Ribot has paid homage with several covers by his group Los Cubanos Postizos, in particular those on his 1998 album *The Postmodern Cubans*.

**VAKOKA: THE MALAGASY ALL-  
STARS**  
INTRODUCING  
WORLD MUSIC NETWORK CD

The best Malagasy collection I've heard in years, this is a showcase for a score of the island's traditional musicians that deserves the widest possible audience. Originally visiting Madagascar to help build windmills, producer Sean Whittaker was astonished at how much high quality local music was going unrecorded and ignored. Teamming up with local wind player Seta and internationally renowned singer Hanitra of the group Tenika, Whittaker determined to capture some of the high-spirited, improvisational music that excited him at local concerts. Far from being 'ethotic', this is sophisticated Malagasy pop in which vocal harmonies, guitars and the monkeybox box-zither interlock with the headlong but festive right-step rhythms characteristic of most local music. Hanitra's part of songs are cool and pretty, then things heat up as vocalist Monga testifies over the breakneck jazzyness of "Dame Iavao". Utterly recommended.

**VARIOUS**  
THE ROUGH GUIDE TO FADO  
WORLD MUSIC NETWORK CD

Fado is Portugal's answer to Greek Rembetika or the blues, an ever elegant acceptance of fate accompanied by chiming, high-pitched guitars. In Lisbon it's a female vocal tradition, preferably performed in a black shawl, while in the university city of Coimbra it's a form of poetry sang by men, often with amateurish or academic connoisseurs. This overview album offers songs by grand daddies of the past — Amália Rodrigues, born 1920, and Hermínia Silve, born 1913 — plus the rehash by a younger generation, now that Fado has received from adoption by Portugal's fascist government till the mid-1970s. Kátia Guerreiro keeps the Rodriguez-style alive, while young stars Joana Azevedo and Ana Moreira try to dislodge her the revered tradition forward. In general the female singing is more moving, but there's guitar playing with fire to listen from Atar Parades (born 1899). Contemporary guitar virtuoso António Chambal also has a track lifted from an album which the inevitable Latin segue has titled *To The Guitar And Other Women*. □



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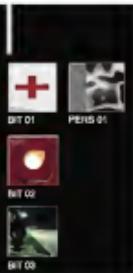
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# HipHop

Reviewed by Hua Hsu

## COMMON FOOD

CMD 12"

"You love to hear the story again and again," Nas' Common over producer Kanye West's graceful clap loops and piano rhymes, "about those young brothers from the city of wood." After a bit of astroturfing, it seems that Common's spurring abus in the first keeps in favor of the worldly concerns of the working class. The troubled citizens of Chicago, lamenting the cynical deities of the street's citizens: "On the block while he is selling is Eminem/On the block it jump off like Kim and then," Kanye supplies the on-my-ground pathos, sympathizing with the plight of the hustlers, drug dealers and even the stepmoms. The great thing about Common is that he is never cynical; rather, his dedication to straightforwardness allows him to see poetry in poetry of simple, mundane things. Approaching the end of the street, he sighs to himself and smiles, "It's all good in the hood/Us rats and gulls/thrownbacks and Tim's/Blacks and rims."

## J BOOGIE'S DUBTRONIC SCIENCE PURPLE PERPENDICULAR PHONICS

CM 12"

Sometimes you just have to throw up your arms and sigh, "it's only!" With the sudden felish for Southern drawls, you have to figure that # Freestyle Felloweth's gravity, grammar-defying MC PEACE were just a few years younger, he'd be serving young trucks left and right. No disrespect to J Boogie's slick cenga beat or guest Raashaan Ahmad, but skip straight to the a cappella. Listen very closely and you'll hear PEACE readying himself for the beat: He clicks his tongue, lets out a series of "ch-ch-ch" sounds and deep breaths, seemingly random but sharply synchronized. Then he begins whispering to himself, testing out his consonants and figuring out if there's enough room for "purple perpendicular phonics." Before he even starts rapping, he's tracking the beat, estimating how much clearance he has for mangling. His slinky versus finaliste posits, dragging it'll have you "call up your CG" while spiced-ups "like Sams living train". Even when PEACE's barbs don't make sense, he's killing you with style: "I watched you paracolony/inta paradise/Only as find that year/Pantropasy/Covered with parasites — yikes!"

## EL-P COLLECTING THE KID

DEFINITIVE JUX CD

El-P is such a bummer he makes hororcore sound like a reason for a very nice day. This collection of instrumentals, remixes and B sides isn't anything even glamor without El-P's dourdown, gray day lyrism. A demented organ and assembly line beatbox drive "Leaving This Pool," with whimpering meeps barely escaping the bay "Juke Skite Rock" doesn't sound anything like a proper roller-rink

anthem, more like a sitzup-addled Rollerball outside.

The history "Intrigue In the House Of India" is a nod to High Water, it's just record on Thirsty Ear, and it's a nice, humane take on its circuit-breaking style. A flute mind's its own business while piano staccato by and a drummer warms up for El's triumphant and surprisingly upbeat programming — it's still chaotic, but in a less wrenching way than usual. "Slow Sex" is a great bit of tender ambience led by flickering, thronerim-like pulses rather than trudging drums. "The Dance" shows that El can still rock a party when he wants to, as he rigs a sparse, dark, thumping chunkish number full of spaces and ground out holes.

## JADAKISS

WHY?

INTERSCOPE 12"

The latest single from Yonkers' greatest is one third social concern, one third self-promotion and one third outright ignorance. Jedi's song is built on a gimmick — each line pursues some kind of pressing question, from why Kobe Bryant got himself in such hot water, to why Lopez and Biggie had to die, to why they let the Yankees win the election? Among his other concerns are the racial politics of the Oscars, the crack epidemic, AIDS, the limited colour schemes for luxury cars, his own incredibleness and "Why they gotta open your package and read your mail? Why they stop istin' brother get degrees in it?" It's one of the better songs one might hear on the radio this year, and probably carries a fair mom papist appeal because of Jedi's complex array of interests. Havoc's beat is a sparkling, swinging beauty, on top of which the diminutive hook specialist Anthony Hamilton warbles with a waffle-fed, handscrawled soul. Interestingly, the American radio edit bleeds out one of Kiss's most pointed questions: "Why old Bush knock down these towers?"

## TALIB KWELI

PEACE OF MIND

H-T-BE 12"

The compressed, sped-up soul thing that producer Kanye West has popularized is getting a little fresher. The beat for this indie one-off from Nas' Def collaborator Talib Kweli is a sizzler, especially when the drums and strings drop for the chumpkin-filled hook. Imae has sounded a little sputty of late, mostly because he seems to feel a sudden, self-imposed pressure to act much harder than he probably is.

Thankfully it sounds totally at ease on "Peace Of Mind," a relatively low key release, offering accounts of a series of episodes from the everyday struggle of life as on off the street. He takes a woman's eye seat to portray those observations. "Sitting on the slope/watching chickens fly the coop/People sleep/Through the night in couples." A stand-up guy, Kweli lectures a young train and then gives a pat on the back to his struggling friend Matoba, reminiscing about the days her cooking and hospitality "was Brooklyn to us."

## MUMS THE WORD

TEXTURE

SMOKY DAY CD

When the name of your CD is Texture, you know what you're getting: music for casual drug use. Mum's is one of those great, severely mellowed out Los Angeles producers whose beats don't end so much as they dissolve, unspool, melt away, stare at the wallpaper, lose interest and then find something else to do. "Intro" is probably as aggressive as he gets, a raw patchwork of celebratory side drum rolls without the payoff. Much of Texture aspires toward some kind of gauzy, guilty but never stationary condition. "Chipped Paint" is all tentative arches and fades, while the stamping clanks and plucking acoustic guitar of "Downread Spear" are a beauty. "Is This The East?" is a nice redemptive of the South motif that are all the big, heavy deal, as space, liquid tickle taps and jingling sizzles get stretched into a menacing, slow desert anthem. The sprightly, bright blues line of "Fat Lip Up" suggests a spacey, budget approximation of Raekwon's "Keep The Lodge," and "I Wanna Be The Same" borrows off itself like a scored shuffle House. The best producers are always looking to challenge themselves and "Finding Mum's" sounds like Mum's attempt to turn throwaway sounds — the insatiable scope of fingerpicks on acoustic strings, drum dithras — into something meditative and resembling a song.

## WALE OYEJIIDE

THERE'S A WAR GOING ON  
SHANAH 12"

Following his debut as subtle, landscaping instrumentalist Science Fiction, Wale Oyejide returns with a much more intense solo release. Oyejide is Nigerian by birth, something he proudly flaunts with his spiffed, Fela Kuti-inspired singing. He cops Fela's sunny, proud monologues and anti-establishment chante down, proclaiming that he "don't give a good goddamn about none of these government lines/because when it's said and done/I'm going to answer to my God".

His broadsheeting is a lit overcooked, but then again, he's talking about war. The beat, presumably rigged by guest Jay Dee, is rhythmic, brashly chugging toward above as ominous, buzzaw synth-rap and a tail of exhaust. Dilla conveys the kind of war Oyejide's talking about, huffing his chest, boasting that he's "18-14 and bragging," I don't say/Only multiply like Andre with the "Hey Yo!"

## SOUL VILLAGE

EVERYBODY LOVES THE SUNSHINE

M2Z MMK008A 7"

Soul Village is better known (well, briefly) as Deja, the Paris-based producer who last won us with his jaunty versioning of Pharrell's "Hooray". Here, he names himself after a Walker Bohm's Jingle Song and reinventing two soul jazz classics, Roy Ayers' "Everybody Loves The Sunshine" and Weldon Irvine's "We Getting Down", with the same looey-gooey, bouncy

together style he leaned on "Pentin". The one man band doesn't start into "Everybody Loves The Sunshine" so much as slump into it, a ramshackle dir of handclaps, Moog and binaural all talking into place precariously. With its huge, loping cymbal crashes and short-attention-span keyboards, it's even lazier than the sunbathing original, and that's a good thing. The inline cut on the flip is still looser, and you can barely make out those gangous key accents and dissonants that A Tribe Called Quest sampled: it's another great interpretation, even when it loses the script near the end and the drummer, keyboardist and bassist — all Deja, presumably — cite "creative differences" and split before the song ends.

## SLOPPY WHITE

THE WAY IT WAS

UCH MY GIMMICK CD

Contrary to popular belief, Sloppy White did not name himself after Skippy White's, the legendary Cambridge, Massachusetts roadie and one of New England's first black music suppliers. The follow-up to his lauded, full-wrapped Fat Lips, The Way It Was is a nice, meaty mix dedicated to the most nondenial bits of late 1980s rep. Real Devil's "Dapper Done" offers a strangely吉林的 gimmick, as the unknown Deejays trade bars about how dropy they are over peacocky paddle samples. "Not an Oscar Mayer weenie/But I'm much, much meaner" one of them brags, before going way to current MTV hearings. Sway's cheery tribute to his partner, "Baddest Muah On 2 Jammin'".

Prize for finding room for the warped hum of The Starry Boys' "If" and the peasant Bass of Magnetic Force's "We Went More", though, as fellow Wire rep columnist recently observed, The Force's schizo, time-changing "U's orthodox" might have made the guitar choice.

## VARIOUS

LUNCH MONEY SINGLES

NULLY CC

Illy Records describes himself as "a 275-pound hunk of burning love" who likes to "talk shit in Frenchified English." For the past year, Illy has run a makeshift charity for the thriving Canada/California production duo, preening limited edit 7"s featuring the subtle beat-trolls of Folksy Bear, Controller 2 and P-Love. Meadowsgirl's "I'm On My Way" is a sleepy sleepwalker pushed forward by an elegant piano lift and squeaky jungle sounds. P-Love's "Bob Lights" infuses a kind of manly and haughty with its roiling web drama, but it's paired with a nice pattern of thumping kicks and sensible guy synths. His other contribution, the beautifully evocative keystroker "Cloudland Mountain Road" has more layers than a Gap advert. Sizito and Smirkita's "Side C" reimagines a couple of Nas lines into "freak beats with correct technique", but even Ged's Son would have trouble riding their deathly slow, tollbooth beat. Sizito and Smirkita's other contributions are probably the only things here one could actually rhyme over, but the sound of voices being dug in the undertow might be distractingly □

# Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Andy Hamilton

## BLUE COLLAR IS AN APPARITION

ROSSINI CO

Though not as committed to reductionism/lower-case music as labels like Estridism, Biggan has been documenting the movement's Statewide progress. Hearing the genre's mated call and Blue Collar, made up of New York downtown's Steve Swell (trombone) and Noe Wesley (trumpet, flugelhorn), plus Takeshi Nakatani (percussion). There's hardly a conventional tone on the disc: Blue Collar explores new possibilities of sound production using traditional instruments in a similar manner to Helmut Lachenmann's "botanical expeditions." On the first unnamed track their exact brawling, writhing and sucking develop into an explosive blowing experience, while from the evoking textures of track six, cymbal and bass are hard to separate. The pained sounds of the next track come as a relief after the focus on contact between body and instrument and the passage of air. A release that concurrently tamps up the quiet.

## PATRICK BRENNAN & SONIC OPENINGS UNDER PRESSURE

RAPT CIRCLE

CIMP CD

Patrick Brennan was involved in the New York folk scene as both bassist and saxophonist. In 1979, he formed Sonic Openings Under Pressure. "Originally, I thought the way to go was to play free," but I wasn't getting the sound I was imagining that way, he comments. "So I wrote more... pointing the scenes and improvisational possibilities somewhere else." The results showed affinities with Henry Threadgill, Mingus and AACM, and the saxophonist later worked with the Gravemusicians of Monroe, developing "improvisation-oriented compositions." The concept is illustrated here by "Sissor Lamp" with its juxtaposed metronome in two live versions from Montreal and NYC's Vision Festival. Hilliard Greene (bass), Newmark Taylor Baker (drums) and Junia Santos Ayubile (percussion) realize an original project: it's Brennan's personal, rather odd tone (he also says it's certa) whether it's best served by CIMP's quirky hi-fi philosophy, which leaves the recording dry and uninviting, or delicate,

## BILL CARROTHERS ARMISTICE 1918

SKETCH RECORDS

Parisi Bill Carrothers's previous releases was the eerie and enigmatic Ghost Shift. Featuring songs from World War One like "It's A Long Way To Tipperary", "And The Band Played On" and "Keep The Home Fires Burning", Armistice 1918 appears even stranger. But this is no exercise in anachronistic nostalgia. "I'm trying to tell a story of that process," Carrothers explains. "From the relative innocence of 1914 to the wasteland of November 11, 1918, to capture the ghosts and stories of that time and encourage them to speak." It helps that the pianist is one of the most original contemporary interpreters of the standards repertoire. Yet this is another way for Carrothers to go his own way, paying no regard to

fashion. The group realising his interpretations and originals includes partner Peg Carrothers – whose small, attractive voice is often required to sing higher than its natural range – plus downtown luminary Matt Jansen on cello, Drew Gress on bass and Bill Stewart on drums. If jazz is the medium for this project, but no other jazz musician could bring it off so eloquently – and you never heard as oblique a version of "It's A Long Way To Tipperary" as this.

## FRODE GJERSTAD &

## LASSE MARHAUG

RED EDGE

BREATHIMPLACED/CARBON/GAMEBOW  
UTTERMÅLFÄRS-BUNSHÖP CD

There's nothing on the disc, save for information about this monster live duet between the Norwegian laptop artist and electric bass virtuoso. It's nearly too late to release what Thelonious Monk wistfully describes as "the utterly fucked electric collaboration... [because] spikes of breath/no action to get yr brain fired to some wholly other wild space." The opening "A Dry Well" is maximally weizen free jazz with Gjerstad showing total control in the hyperactive affluence of his instrument. "Red Edge" in contrast becomes almost Ambient with insistently edgy octet sax. An unresolvable experience.

## FUCHS/LINDSAY/SMITH/ BAGHDASSARIANS/ BALTSCHUN

## THE HAPPYMAKERS

BALANCE POINT ACOUSTICS CD

In his sleeve notes, Ute Elleé comments that pianist Jacob Lindsay and bassist Damon Smith represent a new generation of American improvisers whose models are Derek Bailey, Evan Parker and Peter Kowald rather than the jazz masters. Born 1972 in Spokane, Washington state, Damon Smith's main teacher was Elleé, but he also has a classical background. When he left Kowald's Dusseldorf Ensemble he added his Fender bass and concentrated solely on acoustic bass and free music. The presence of live electronics – in the persons of Serge Baghdassarian and Bass Balschun, both from Berlin – is another contemporary development in improv.

Partly because this approach to musical creation is so intuitive, it's often easier to recognise its quality than to know why it's good. Here, the precision and concentration of effects and the players' evident instrumental mastery – Wolfgang Fach's sizzling soprano saxophone, antagonistic and expansive, is a particular delight. Through 11 tracks named simply ("Mayflyer 1-11"), these edgey, intense and often emotional collaborations make for a really outstanding album. A major plus is the vivid recording – as the players' hangups about hi-fi from these days

## JESSICA JONES NOD

NEW ARTISTS CO

Also tenor saxophonist and composer Jessica Jones covers an impressive stylistic

range, having worked with Bill Diddley, Cab Calloway, Cecil Taylor and Steve Coleman, and recorded with Don Cherry on Mulhouse. Originally from the Bay Area, she now lives in Brooklyn, and her new album is a family effort: the basic quartet includes husband Tony also on tenor sax, Ken Filiano on bass and Derrick Phillips on drums. Ideas on some tracks are by daughter Candace. It's notable how elsewhere the music takes on the identity of their guests. "Love And Perseverance" and "Happiness", featuring Joseph Jernas on alto sax and bass clarinet, have an Art Ensemble Of Chicago flavor ("Bird's Word", featuring legendary Tenor Innes Trebilcot, Connie Crothers on piano, is Charlie Parker as translated by Trebilcot. Both Jones plays tenor sax that sounds like the missing link between Herbie Mann and Anthony Braxton. The funky, quirky "Podcast Show" concludes an appealingly diverse album.

## RAPHE MALIK/JOE MCPHEE/ DONALD ROBINSON

SYMPATHY

BORHOLDER CD

Both Malik/Borholder releases in this column feature the unusual configuration of two horns plus drums, but on Sympathy, straddling the worlds of free jazz and Improv, the absence of a bassist is less significant. Trumpeter Raphe Malik worked in Paris in the 70s with Cecil Taylor, Jimmy Lyons and Hank Wright, and began his association with drummer Donald Robinson. But he first played with multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee at a club gig the day before this recording session in October 2009. In the studio, McPhee limited himself to pocket trumpet and soprano sax. All competitions are by Malik, but the ethos reflects Robinson's concern with mixing free and groove-based material. "Statement" is structured round a single clarinet riff, yet remains an unusually melodic/castile – but then there's a haunting feel even on faster numbers. An album of spare and mournful beauty.

## PAAL NILSEN-LØVE & KEN VANDERMARK

DUAL PLEASURE 2  
SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND ZCD

Although Vandermark, powerhouse saxophonist and leader of the Chicago musical avant garde, has shown an interest in more restrained areas, this double album with Oslo drummer Nilssen-Løve will surely hint at his full-throttle outbursts. The first disc is a studio recording, the second live, both from Oslo, and Vandermark also plays B flat and bass clarinets. On "Train Hits The Station" and "Never Leave Well Enough Alone", and on much of the second CD, the playing is in the Cobain/Teenage Drunkenness mould. Vandermark's impassioned tenor has an almost religious fervour, his tone heavily vocalised. A thoroughly dual pleasure.

## OEAN POPE QUARTET TWO DREAMS

CIMP CD

Oean Pope was born in 1938 in South Carolina but grew up in Philadelphia. The city's

thriving modern jazz scene produced three quarters of The John Coltrane Quartet, Clifford Brown and Archie Shepp, but Pope also worked in the pit band at the Uptown theater for Stevie Wonder, Gladys Knight, The Temptations, James Brown and Marvin Gaye. Unlike many tenor players who heard Coltrane's message, he developed a sound of his own. But though he began an association with master drummer Max Roach in 1967, he was content for many years to stay in his home town.

This quartet with Carl Grubbs on alto, Tyrone Brown on bass and Craig Maher on drums are reminiscent of the wonderful albums he made with Roach. The long second track, "The Folio", finds his oak-masted tenor sound at its most distinctive, with unostentatious use of circular breathing – though it's wrong to separate tone, tonality and conception when these are so perfectly matched. After a free dirge intro, Brown sets up a beautifully sultained melodic groove against which the saxes, rather Middle Eastern theme and improvisations are played out. Sheer Papal infidelity.

## MICHEL SCHEEN QUARTET DANCE, MY DEAR? GWA CD

Dutch pianist and composer Michel Scheen has worked with Anthony Braxton, Guss Janssen, George Lewis and Roscoe Mitchell. He may be little known, but these are high quality compositions, interpreted by a quartet with Ab Baars on tenor sax and clarinet, Ernst Glasmann on bass and Han Bennink on drums. The starting funkier "Serialities" signals an original voice, but is it as preparation for the extraordinary "God Is Heaven (Stay)?", a meditative on the repeated single note akin to Thelonious Monk's "Thelonious", its fierce drive offering a European take on the free jazz/pulse/no noise concept. In fact the postludes with Monk's role as composer for band are significant – though a fine improvising pianist, Scheen dominates through his compatriots, which the other players serve admiringly. "This Time", an interrupted bailed, exploits silence in a way unfamiliar in jazz. "Idols" features Baars's cawing tenor.

## SONNY SIMMONS/MICHAEL MARCUS/JAY ROSEN COSMOSAMATICS THREE BORHOLDER CD

The Cosmosamatics play hard swinging free jazz, which they sustain on their third release despite dispensing with a bassist. Drummer Jay Rosen maintains a driving intensity, and while Michael Marcus's baritone compensates at times for the lack of bass, a supporting line could equally be supplied by Sonny Simmons's alto sax or English horn.

Four tracks are studio recordings from 2002, four are live at Amsterdam's Bimhuis from 2003, and compositions by Marcus and Simmons. The opening "Fetus" is given a hypnotic African feel by Rosen's resonant tom toms. The shuffle-based "Bring On The Funk" does just that. Marcus's keyboard "Requiem For Anne Frank" closes a memorable album. □

# Outer Limits

Reviewed by Keith Moliné

## COELACANTH

### MUD WALL

HELEN SCARSDALE AGENCY CD

Another month, another record featuring Loren Chasse, Jewelled Amber (massay) and possibly the most prolific musician alive. Mud Wall is his third collaboration with Jim Hayes (sound artist and Mike contractor), and like last year's Glass Sponges, it's utterly captivating. The dominant textures are driving emanations from deeply resonant spectral metals, layered and twisted to the point where the music resembles the slow inhalation and exhalation of the entire ecosystem. It's darker and more forbidding than their previous work, which was more suggestive of the prehistoric ocean depths implied by the duo's name. Here, it's as if the vibrations and reverberances from heavy industry are being captured by contact micro at the Earth's core.

## ROCCO DI PIETRO

### MULTIPLES/ THE LOST PROJECT

2xCD

Di Pietro's book *Dialogues With Boulez* may lead some to expect the modernist academic rigor for which the French maestro is famous to be a similar feature of his own music. But here is a composer who defies any attempt at categorization, though primarily conceptual in approach, his music communicates on a simple and powerful emotional level. Di Pietro's humanist concern with those on the fringes of society (passers, lost children) echoes Harry Partch, and in some ways the music shares and embodies that dichotomy of naïvety and sophistication. The methodology outlined by the composer in the liner notes also suggests Cage, but the music, particularly the live improvisation of *The Lost Project* as performed by The Avant Collective, is warm, exciting and accessible. Di Pietro's art somehow manages to connect while remaining mysterious and elusive.

## DIELECTRIC MINIMALIST ALL-STARS

### DIELECTRIC MINIMALIST ALL-STARS

DIELECTRIC 2xCD

Quite why Drew Webster, alias Die Elektromaker, has chosen this absurd name for his latest

collaborative project when there is little to connect the music to any of the normal notions of what constitutes minimalism, is a mystery. And despite the involvement of (for that man again) Loren Chasse, to call these guys "stars" is a monstrosity. No matter -- the music is superb. The first disc features a series of fluid improvisations featuring Webster's prepared turntables alongside Chasse's electroacoustic "emanations" and great percussion from Jason Lewis, whose sexual fire recalls Eddie Polles' early AMM work. The second disc features remixes, or reconfigurations, of the same material by a number of composers on the Dielectric roster, all of whom reward the sounds in interestingly noisy ways. Chris Palmerer's fractured *Celeste-Ya-Space* ("Celeste-Ya-Space") is particularly good.

## JOHN DUNCAN & ELLIOTT SHARP

### TONGUE

ALL QUESTIONS CO

Former enfant terrible of installation art John Duncan's fascination lies in what can be learned when we are pushed beyond extremes. His past work involved his own total immersion in acts of shocking transgression, holding the least forgiving of morsos up to his audience; his recent sound art is a calmer reflection on similar themes. Elliott Sharp's extraordinary prowess across a vast range of musical disciplines is well known; here he sees the pair exploring the limits of the human voice through rigorous processing, which exposes its natural grain (Sharp's threat-produced harmonics sounding particularly startling) while simultaneously splitting it into complex, spellbinding patterns. Hearing among these lie the modulated voice signals from shortwave radio. The fascinating results suggest a strange universal language of the soul, mysteriously encoded in the very physiology that dictates vocal production.

## MARGARIDA GARCIA & MATTIN

### FOR PERMITTED CONSUMPTION

LUMINOBLE CD-R

Electric double bassist Garcia and computer feedback architect Mattin both share a whisper-

to-a-scream aesthetic that makes this live improv session for Resonance FM a hair-raising listen. Moments of calm, poised beauty, such as a gorgeous plucked passage from Garcia towards the end, vie with sections where the fabric of the sound is ripped apart by searing feedback howls.

The real power of the disc's approach, however, lies in the way they eschew all-or-nothing dynamics. There's a constant undertow of danger and instability during the more placid sections, with Mattin's noise sputtering erupting from within the calm, and a corresponding sense of the ensuing chaos being reined in, sculpted and shaped into a more manageable form. Garcia's extended instrumental techniques become prominent as the session progresses, but the drama of the album lies in the battles and tussles between the pair as they struggle to achieve equilibrium.

## KIM HIORTHOY

### FOR THE LADIES

SMALLTOWN SUPERLOUD CD

Possibly Loren Chasse's nearest neighbor in the West Pacific Artistic stakes, Hiorthoy's latest is an exploration of pure field recording. While he has already used such techniques, they've hitherto been employed as emotionally suggestive textures at the service of his sparse, folky electronics rather than forming the basis of his work. As before, he has collated a series of small sounds documenting domestic life, and obviously feels that the raw recordings create enough resonance or over-warmth to warrant at least partially hands-off approach on his part. While *For The Ladies* achieves a calm, elegiac mood akin to flowing through a lost relative's family album, the downside is that there's a rather forced, self-conscious novelty to the project, a stockier-pelt that hampers attempts to engage with the sounds as anything more than cute documentary vignettes.

## ON YOUR NAKED GHOST COMES BACK AT NIGHT

LES DISQUES DU SOLEIL ET DE LA MER CD

On air Chicago percussionist Steven Hess (from Post American) and pianist Sylvain Chaveau

(now playing peasant guitar). They've worked with Fennessy among others, and have secured the services of a very sympathetic mixer in Helge Sten (Deathproof), who has somehow managed to create a sense of spaciousness and separation within their dense grey landscapes. The results recall the more abstract moments of Man or Stars *Of The Lot*, resonating duly like the vibrations inside an old submarine as giant marine creatures nonchalantly bat at the hall.

There is just one slightly puzzling aspect of *Your Naked Ghost Comes Back At Night* — that is the extremely low level at which the disc has been mastered, forcing the listener to deal with the music as an adjunct to whatever environmental sound might be present. The problem is that it seems to disappear completely at Ambient levels, which means that you have to crank the volume right up in order to attain the full benefit of their deep and slowly evolving textures.

## RODRIGO SIGAL

### SPACE WITHIN

CD

Sigal is a Mexican composer who developed this on an album as part of his PhD in electroacoustic music. *Space Within* suggests that Space Within might comprise finely, dry displays of empty technique are initially borne out by the somewhat derivative opening track "Friction Of Things In Other Places". The piece is so close to *Sequencer* that Sigal should consider bidding it homage — it is far too suggestive of both *kontakte* in its use of various textual abrasives, and *Telektronik* in its deployment of partially submerged samples of global musics.

Luckily, the remaining pieces are quite superb. Best are the three that use two instrumentists (timpani, bassoon and cello respectively), working in tandem with Sigal's treatments and acoustic backdrops. The instrumental writing is uniformly excellent, in particular the excellent timpani piece "Wimberlinha", but the magic resides in the unsavory balance and overlap between synthetic and natural elements, meticulously overseen by a composer of genuine flair and invention. □

# Cornucopia .C. Works

2xCD

Full length album by field recording/drone power duo from Puerto Rico, plus cd of remixes by: Andrew Duke, Francisco Lopez, Kim Cascone, Critikal, Zanstones, Omai, Needle & Sony Mao, Lasse Marhaug, Black Sand Desert, Ultra Milkmaids, David Wells, TV Pow, duul\_drv & RGV

Explain to me: «Difficult Music»

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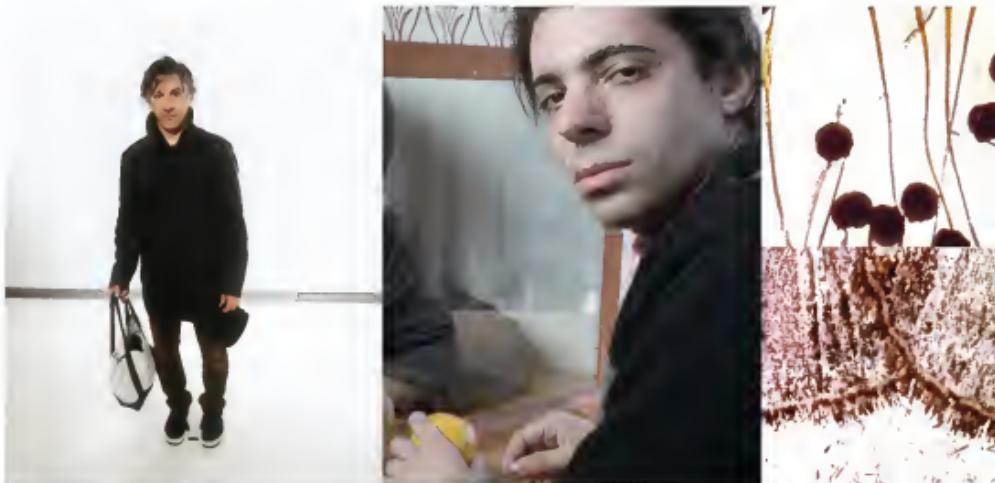
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COMING SOON: Violet + Michael Gendreau »Live in Russia« CD

# Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: Marc Masters talks to Lee Ranaldo and Alan Licht about their group Text Of Light, who play live accompaniments to the experimental films of Stan Brakhage and other masters of underground cinema



Lee Ranaldo (left), Alan Licht (middle), stills from Stan Brakhage's underground cinema, and the Text Of Light group (left to right): Ranaldo, DJ Olive, Ulrich Knecht, Licht and William Rauschenberg

The music of Text Of Light, the improvisational collective centred around guitarists Lee Ranaldo and Alan Licht, is not the soundtrack to Stan Brakhage's 1974 film *The Text Of Light*. Granted, the group perform while just such Brakhage movies screen above them. But, as Ranaldo says, "We're not trying to illustrate the film. Our view is that the music and the film are two events happening simultaneously."

"You can paint yourself in a corner if you watch the film too carefully and try to react to it," adds Licht, also a *Wire* contributor. "We're reacting to the film no more or less than we're reacting to what we're playing. Sometimes the flicker from the projector is something we react to more than the film itself."

"Often when you watch improvisors, there's not a lot going on beside the music," continues Ranaldo. "Giving the visual focus over to the film has actually meant that people listen to the music more."

The *Text Of Light*, a stunning 7½ minute montage of rays refracted through a glass astirry, is possibly Brakhage's most abstract work. *Text Of Light* have also played along with screenings of his *Dog Star Man*, *Anticipation Of The Night* and *Ellipsis* – all of them pure studies of light and motion. They exist, as Fred Camper explains in his *By Brakhage* DVD notes, "primarily in a kind of virtual space within the viewer's imagination, and in the subjective interaction between viewer and film". *Text Of Light* explore similar spaces – the area between sound and picture, and between finished work and live improvisation – as well as the infinite ways those elements can interact. "There's a certain probability that any music is going to fall in

and out of sync with any film," suggests Licht, "and that's something that we're trying to operate on, as opposed to doing a specific score. One thing that has reminded me of the relationship between the films and our improvisations is the meshing. Stampdancing is not necessarily in time to music. It's more a physical reaction to the energy. In a way, the Brakhage films are the stampdancers, and we're the hardcore band. That's also true of Merce Cunningham's dance pieces with John Cage. The dances and the music have nothing to do with each other, and that's kind of the point, that you don't have to choreograph things exactly to anything in the music."

*Text Of Light* began in 1999, when saxophonist Ulrich Knecht initiated a show at New York's Tonic featuring himself, Licht, Ranaldo, drummer William Hooker and turntablist Christian Marclay. Soon after, Ranaldo and Licht cast *Text Of Light* as a recurring unit, expanded to include turntablists DJ Olive and Maria Rosenfeld and drummer Tim Barnes. The group now perform in a variety of line-ups, usually a quintet, but occasionally as a trio or quartet. "Since we use a lot of the same films, if it were the same exact people playing every time, it may not generate the same kind of fresh results," explains Licht. "Lee and I are the only people who've played almost every performance, and even our own approaches have changed."

Some have questioned the ethics of playing music with films made as silents. "There has been some controversy, which was ultimately interesting," conveys Ranaldo. "It put me in touch with Marilyn Brakhage [Stan's widow], and we came to a place where we're

both happy with how things are done." The group's self-titled CD on the label Straight Furniture Co includes a disclaimer, written with Marilyn Brakhage's approval, that the music is neither a collaboration with Stan Brakhage nor a soundtrack for his films. "When we play, we present it as a live music event," continues Ranaldo. "We try to make it clear that if you want to experience the Brakhage films for what they are, you have to go see them in their proper context."

"The companion I use," adds Licht, "is that Peter Paul Rubens didn't create his paintings with the intention that they be used in a Robert Rauschenberg collage a few centuries later. I don't think [the Rauschenberg collage] should prevent anyone from going to see a Rubens painting. That's how we've attempted to frame these concerts, as live-action mixed media collages."

"At a show in Pittsburgh," reprises Ranaldo, "Bruce Conner's *Looking For Muhammad* with its fantastic Torrey Riley soundtrack screened first, and it really set up the idea of combining a certain kind of music and a certain kind of visual. Showing [remixed] opening film helps set the tone for what we do."

"It's also a good way to get these films out of the closed circuit of art houses and museums," adds Licht. "Brakhage is a very important innovator. He virtually created the entire form, and he still isn't that well known."

To date *Text Of Light* have released three recordings: a one-sided 12" in *Table Of The Elements' Lanthanides* series; a limited run art edition LP pressing by the German imprint En/Ot which came wrapped in a press



of artwork, also titled *Text Of Light*, by Tacita Dean; and the aforementioned *Text Of Light* CD, culled from three different performances. Dense with detail and wide in scope, the latter's masterful Improv is characterized by Ranaldo and Licht's textured, mountain-climbing guitars and Hooker's torrential drumming. It's also strangely cinematic, like a fragmented dream – objectively random yet surreally logical – due to Clive's and Barclay's spiky concrete sounds, which add bursts of dislocated narrative. Each track is an uncut excerpt from a show, but other releases feature various recordings edited together. "When we first decided to release stuff, we were so tied to the music existing alongside these films that it took us a while to figure out how to approach the music alone," says Ranaldo. "Since then we've gone back into the recordings and combined different moments."

"In a way," adds Licht, "we had to go through the process of selecting extended excerpts that we felt were strong enough to stand on their own first. So now we can go back and find individual things and mix them together."

A similar process guided Ranaldo's recent soundtracks for three plays and a short film, as documented on the forthcoming CD *Music For Stage And Screen*. The album primarily features music from *Demons*, Italian stage director Michele Salimbeni's adaptation of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Devils*. To generate the scores, Ranaldo played in and recorded separate duo sessions with Licht and Barclay, and also collected sounds from Hooker and percussionist

Günter Müller. "The fun part was mixing and matching all of the sounds together, taking something that Christian did and cutting it with something Alan and I did a month before," says Ranaldo. "I worked over that stuff for so long that eventually I had no idea which sounds were whose, except that Christian was obviously using records and sampling classical sounds, which were very effective as something the rest of us weren't producing."

Seeing how the plays and film share some tracks, the chilly string of highly evocative landscapes constituting *Muse For Stage And Screen* is impressively coherent. Ranaldo weaves motifs – looping clicks, vocal noise and frozen guitar chords – through a variety of enveloping settings, from the solemnly strummed "The Fire" to the full-on soundstomper "Savoy Assassins". If the pieces hold up as audio-only experiences, it's partially because Ranaldo had little information to go on about the visuals they would accompany. "I knew what lengths were needed, and what mood pieces should have," he says. "But mostly I built around the titles, because they were really evocative. The directors were willing to go against the grain of traditional uses of sound to image, which is nice because you get some surprising results, such as very violent music working well in a tender scene or the reverse. I generally like films where the soundtrack is less predictable. I love the soundtrack to Polanski's *Repulsion*. I've taken copious notes on it and written out tentative score charts for a 'cover version' of it that I'd like to do at some point." While his soundtrack work overlaps with *Text Of*

*Light* – both rely on improvisation while exploring the unpredictability of combining sound and picture – Ranaldo finds the two significantly different. "These soundtrack pieces each have a beginning, middle and end, with certain thematic elements which come and go," he explains. "Not to say that the *Text Of Light* gigs don't have conscious beginnings, middles and ends, but they're done on the fly, whereas this stuff was worked over quite a bit. It's more like sculpting, carving something out of raw material, I'd compare it to some of my writing, or some of the visual art I've been involved in – taking some raw data or building blocks, and then responding to the assembly and modifying it, letting the sounds take you where they will."

"It's similar to the manner in which Sonic Youth composed a lot of our music," he continues. "Generate some information, then modify it and work it over further. As Jasper Johns said, 'Take an object, Do something to it. Do something else to it. And something else...'"

That teleless approach makes the marriage of Ranaldo's diligent constructions to their accompanying images less a final destination than another step in an ever-evolving dialogue. "Some pieces really found a home once they were locked with images," he concludes. "The character of the music changes when you attach it to something else. It's great to watch the pieces take on another life." □

*Text Of Light* is out now on Starlight Furniture Co. Lee Ranaldo's *Music For Stage And Screen* is released this month on Les Disques Du Soir Et De L'Acor



Lost in Leytonstone: Images from Graeme Miller's *LINKED* soundtrack

## JOHN CALE

### FRAGMENTS OF A RAINY SEASON

REVIEW BY MATT PYTCHIE

Released more than a decade after the solo up-laged European tour of 1992 when it was filmed, this DVD of John Cale's *Bausells* performances is an exercise in simplicity and subtlety. The spotlight dwells wholly on Cale alone at the piano or with the guitar, cutting between his hand and face with little sense of the world beyond the stage. Seated in black with white cravat, and with a pale, gaunt and sombre face, he evokes the figure of a vampire in the first flush of decay.

However, his solo playing on both instruments is punchy and percussive, making ample use of those driving staccato riffs that stretch back to *The Velvet Underground*. There are a few differences in material from the album of the same title, "Dwelling" and "Guts" have dropped off the playlist, while the concert opens with Cale's settings of Dylan Thomas from the *Silenced Suite* – the piano on "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" approaches the minimalism of Philip Glass. Though the use of an acoustic set to yield a muted retrospective of a career has become a familiar rock gesture, Cale's motorik rhythms work slightly against the intimacy that comes with the format, while the solo performances in turn can't quite yield the energy of Cale's pounding arrangements.

Those that slip most persuasively into reflective mode are more elegant pieces, such as "Style It Like Us" from *Songs For Drella*, "I Keep At Close Watch" and Leo and Coen's "Hallelujah", though it would take something of a minor catastrophe to displace Jeff Buckley's version now.

## GRAEME MILLER: LINKED

### LONDON LEYTONSTONE

BY LOUISE GRAY

Wild just left the car park of Leytonstone's Asda supermarket when the voices began. "A safe came

flying through the pub window" says one woman. "I'll never forget it." The accompanying sound is some faint Ambient treatment, quite distant from the nearby traffic on its way to the motorway that joins London to Cambridge. The speaker's friend agrees. She, however, remembers best the bouncer who worked at the pub. "A big bloke. Oh, he was gorgeous." We walk on. The voices fade.

These women are just two in the cast of more than 75 interviewees whose narratives of life around Grove Green Road in East London's derelict area Graeme Miller's ongoing *LINKED* project. Describing itself as "a landmark in sound, an invisible artwork, a walk", *LINKED* is all of these things, and perhaps a bit more. Its underlying theme is how memory makes a landscape and Miller's aim is not just to map the experiences of generations of Leytonstoneans, but to trigger the associations and particular stories of all those who walk his route.

*LINKED*, a three-mile walk along a byway to the side of the M11 link road, is organised around a simple principle. We pass need after need that has been absurdly amputated. Houses have disappeared and scrubby vegetation seeded itself among the demolition. We carry small box receivers (loaned from local libraries) and headphones. Once in range of any of *LINKED*'s 20 transmitters, the voices and sounds start up, all with their own stories of the Blitz; a postman's round; of Dolly Mink and the old lady who made pompage the Scottish way like ghosts inhabiting the own frequency, the stories run and run on continuous loop. Sometimes phrases are snatched out and repeated, a way of reinforcing what's been lost.

Miller is a highly personal work. In 1984, Miller moved to a house in the area like many artists (including composers Joeylin Pools and Jeremy Peyton-Jones, film maker John Smith and sculptor Comilla Parker, all of whose voices appear on *LINKED*), he was attracted by large spaces and cheap rents offered by the local housing co-op. Years passed; a community developed. This was galvanised into opposition when the government approved the demolition of

many of the streets to create the motorway link road that gives Miller his title. In 1994, police evictions were carried out with such brutality that they made national news. If *LINKED* is Miller's own exercise of these events, it's also a way of mending something now broken. (Incidentally, it's not the only amateur response to the demolitions. Pook and Smith's short music and film project, *Corrugated Iron Tango*, announced back some pleasure at the expense of the wrecks.)

Miles, a former theatre director who has worked closely with the Influential Impact Theatre, has increasingly moved towards sound work in recent years, like his *Scene Observatory* (1992), which placed listening posts of sound and voice all over the Birmingham area to create a huge, sacred grid, or *Listening Ground*, *Last Acres* (1994, with Mary Lennox), which aligned radio transmitters across Solihull Park. Miller's sound installations are huge works, a missing link between the long art of Richard Long, Andy Goldsworthy and even James Turrell, with the vertically based promenades of Janet Cardiff or Soundways' urban explorations. What makes Miller's work is his insistence on the encounter the audience has with the material. In the case of *LINKED*, what we're hearing is not so much history, but a careful layering of events and emotions to which we're invited to bring our own resonances.

## VARIOUS

DIN AV 01/04/CN/86/03

OVERSCAPE DVD

WILL MONTGOMERY

From *>Scape*, the label owned by Berlin musician and producer Peter (aka Stefan Betke), comes this DVD marrying music to image tracks generated by various DJs. Betke explains that, for him, images are a means of "expanding" what he's trying to do with his music in the club environment.

With a domestic DVD, though, things are different, so the question becomes: how does one engage with it? A domestic space can rarely

match a club, either in physical scale or in the physiology of music heard at club volumes. *Repetition*, too, is a factor. While a favourite CD will be listened to countless times, few people have the same appetite for repeated viewings of moving images. Dimbiman, one of DIN AV's musical contributors, gets it about right during one of the disc's interviews: a DVD such as this is best viewed as an auto CD with cues. Rather than "expanding" the experience of music in the domestic environment, it can contract. Without the sensory boost of high volume, big screens and, perhaps, mood-enhancers, the radical differences between aural and visual input are underlined rather than erased. Being asked to sit still and watch can feel unfairly coercive compared to the expense of unfiltered audio.

However, despite all these woes about how to engage, there's plenty to recommend the DVD. The music, although uneven, certainly hangs together as a compilation of Berlin-focused indie/club music. Besides Dimbiman, there's Redrennen, Jon Jelicks' Safety Sounds, Modest and Christian Klöne. Video artist Vesnati's reflections on urban architecture – a model city always on the point of dissolving – make a smooth fit with Jon Jelicks' witty post-Tecno, Redrennen, who think of video and music as equal parts of what they do, contribute an elegant fusion, meimene video images dawdling with the many twists and turns of the music. U-Matic's scrutiny, the anamorphic video-glitching is more stimulating than the anemic audio track supplied by Safety Sounds. Jong Franemann's piece for Dimbiman underwhelms with discarded shorts. The editing of the only narrative-based piece, "Pfadfindern" – a choppy take on making supper on a two-burner stove – is both dynamic and funny; well attuned to the likes "n' dice of Nodder's music. The borderlines between loop-oriented DJ work and video art is cleverly probed by much of this material, but in the end Dimbiman is right: while this is a valuable document of a young medium, the best use for this DVD is as a CD with bonuses. □

# The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by Storm Thorgerson



## LITTLE FEAT DOWN ON THE FARM

WARNERS 1979

IMAGE BY NEON PARK

Choosing my favourite piece of sleeve art is intrinsically difficult, nigh on impossible. Is it the wall, hold a gun to my head, or have a possessive woman ask me, then one of my favourites is *Down On The Farm* by the most fabulous Neen Park, painter, wildman, comic genius, fantastist, and surrealist and all-round

wonderful person. Or so I imagine from his work, especially for Little Feat and none better than this sleeve featuring a duck woman reclining by a pool doing her nails. A duck woman? *Down On The Farm*... what farm? Must be a farm in LA, since she sits by a pool casually preening herself with soft seductive eyes but a huge duck bill instead of a pretty human nose – totally absurd yet totally delightful!

What I like most is the playful irreverence (one of the more charming aspects of rock music in

general). Is it related to Little Feat? They don't have little feet – I suspect dear ol' Neen was simply into ducks in a big way, like any artist obsessed by something or other. In fact he had amassed a series of duck prints including Betty Grable, Jane Russell and Marilyn Monroe ducks, not to mention a vampire duck which Neen called Duckula. And Little Feat agreed that the image was great, funny and bizarre and would therefore do fine as their album cover. And good bless 'em for that, let alone some great bluddy

rock 'n' roll. Why a duck woman? But then I used a cow for Pink Floyd (*Astron Heart Mother*), and why a cow? □ Storm Thorgerson founded the London based design company Hipgnosis in the 1970s. He has famously designed iconic record covers for groups such as Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin and Styx. An exhibition of his album cover art will be held at London's John Martin Chelsea from 16 September–9 October. Limited edition signed prints are available at [www.mrlondon.com](http://www.mrlondon.com)

## Go To:



Expansion on music industry distribution has led some artists to bypass record companies and share their work for free. Go To! favorite UtterWeb ([www.utterweb.com](http://www.utterweb.com)) placed the entire 14 year output by platinum/silver artist Vicki Bennett aka People Like Us ([www.peoplelikeus.org](http://www.peoplelikeus.org)) online a while back. Now it has gone one step further by hosting her brand new album. Called from PLU's radio work, Abridged Life, Far continues her line of finely tuned one-off packages of popular music from the early 20th century to the present. "I've Got You" is a mishmash of Western MOR hits such as "Gulf Stream Boomer", "I've Got You Under My Skin", "Que Sera Sera" and a whole host of other familiarities. "Daily Perdon" is a gaggle of radio

presenters muttering "um" and "erm" to the accompaniment of Dolly Parton's guitar. About going online with her new album, Bennett comments, "We strongly believe in the power of profit through free distribution. Often people have never heard of an artist because they aren't being distributed through as many channels as they should be, due to the poor state of mass/media distribution for non-major label music coupled with ignorance of the way that avant garde artists influence mainstream culture."

Sampling composer Ergo Phonic ([www.ergophonic.com](http://www.ergophonic.com)) has also released a new EP, White Light/Middle Reed, on its site. It combines Velvet Underground homages with sputtering overdriven vocals, wacky Donald Duck

recitations, acoustic elements such as fingerpicking banjo and distorted beats, all lifted together in Phonic's schizoid style. Try it. You might even like it.

**Creative Use And Misuse Of Musical Tools**  
<http://missersseou.edu/impact/101/Focus/Media-arts/jlctch/about.htm> may have a lengthy name and a grumpy URL, but be patient – it's worth the trouble. This labour of love contains an essay on glitch music and electronica, and, most impressively, numerous tracks to go with the text. The different sections serve up a wide choice of tracks by artists ranging from AMM, Anthony Braxton and Alva Noto, to DJ Automata, Autopoesis, Autotune and Dan Abrams – and that's just the A section.

ANNE HILDE NESET

# Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Fela Kuti live at The Shrine in Lagos (documentary image from the Black President exhibition opening at London's Barbican this month). All women: Yoko Ono (unreviewed facing page)

## AFROBEAT! FELA AND THE IMAGINED CONTINENT SOLA OLORUNYOMI AFRICA WORLD PRESS/PBK \$34.95

## FELA: FROM WEST AFRICA TO WEST BROADWAY TREVOR SCHOONMAKER (EDITOR)

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN PBK \$19.95

BY BRIAN MARLEY

"I am trying to use my music as a weapon," Fela Anikulapo-Kuti declared. "As far as Africa is concerned, music cannot be for enjoyment, it has to be for revolution."

That wasn't always the case. During the 1960s, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was, as he was known, then, most content merely to revolutionise highlife music with his group Koola Lobitos. Or at least try to revolutionise it. But his material was for him promising, nonsensical lyrics about, for example, being tickled, or songs with imbecilic subjects. Essentially, Fela's music, though more jazz-influenced than the music of other Highlife groups, operated very much like them, as entertainment. From 1968-69 I studied music at Trinity College, London, got married for the first time, and I hung out with his cousin, the playwright Wole Soyinka. Unlike Soyinka, Fela's politics at the time were extremely well hidden or almost non-existent. But in 1969, in Los Angeles, he met an African-American woman, Sandra Smith (later known as Sandra Isabident), who gave him

Alex Haley's biography of Malcolm X. Fela also read Stokely Carmichael, Marcus Garvey and Martin Luther King, and he was introduced to the political philosophy of the Black Panthers. When he returned to Nigeria in 1970 he was a changed man.

In Lagos he founded Nigeria 70 (soon renamed Africa 70, to indicate the pan-African thrust of his thinking), opened the Alto Spot nightclubs and began to play the music we now know as Afrobeat, a combination of propulsive, hard-hitting African rhythms, funky basslines, jazz-influenced improvisation and charged call-and-response songs. In 1970 he released his first major hit "Jeun Kolo", as well as "Buy Africa" and "Black Man's Cry". When his nightclubs moved to the Empire Hotel in 1972, he renamed it the Afrika Shrine and added elements of African ritual to the performances. Then, Fela's political provocations and law-flouting activities, not to mention his gloriously hedonistic lifestyle, were drawing the unwelcome attention of the Nigerian authorities, which he frequently denounced as hypocritical, corrupt, un-African, anti-spiritual and malignant. Fela and his entourage's skirmishes with the police and the military escalated during the 1970s. In 1974, he was hospitalised for 17 days as a result of injuries sustained at the hands of the police. This merely caused him to step up his provocations. In 1975 he named his rapidly growing household at 14A Agege Motor Road the

Kelakota Republic and proclaimed it beyond the reach of Nigerian law and jurisdiction.

Antagonism reached boiling point in 1977, when the second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (known as FESTAC) was staged in Lagos. Fela, by then the most famous musician in Nigeria, refused to participate and instead held a counter-FESTAC. To the acute embarrassment of the Nigerian authorities, FESTAC performers like Stevie Wonder, Sun Ra and Gil Scott-Heron attended Fela's shows at the Afrika Shrine. Shortly afterwards, soldiers attacked the Kelakota compound. Fela and his followers were badly beaten, some of the women were raped, his elderly mother sustained serious injuries after being thrown from a first-floor window, and the building was burned to the ground. Fela's response was characteristically defiant: he established Kelakota at a new location, and on the first anniversary of the assault he named all 27 women in his entourage, referring to them as his "queens".

Both the books under review have useful things to say about these extraordinary matters and the way Fela's life played out during the 1960s and 90s – the arrests, imprisonment, provocations and skirmishes continued to the end of his days. So too did performances at the Afrika Shrine. One of the key chapters in Sola Olorunyomi's *Afrobeat!* is a detailed examination of a typical evening at the Shrine (some of this material is paraphrased in the

chapter he contributes to *Fela*). But although *Afrobeat!* is authoritative and invaluable, especially for its analysis of Fela's politics, song lyrics and use of traditional African elements in both his life and his music, the book has one significant flaw: the descriptions of Fela's music fail to ignite.

*Fela's* 12 chapters and two interviews (one with Fela, the other with Ferri, his oldest son) are less cohesive and also less conspicuously interesting than *Afrobeat!*, but aspects of Fela's life and legacy are powerfully conveyed. The best – a chapter apiece by LaRay Denair and Vivian Goldman on the important role of various women in Fela's life, from Dorothy's "Roboro Fight", Olorunyomi's "On Whose Side Are The Onios (Gods)?", and extracts from the diary that John Collier kept while participating in Fela's autobiographical film *The Black President* – make this book a must-read.

*Fela* may have wanted to foment a revolution in Africa, but he had to settle for resistance, active rather than passive. This should not be seen as failure. To stand firm against the Nigerian government for more than two decades took considerable courage. His stance and his songs helped alert the world to the realities that were taking place in Nigeria: the corruption, the human rights violations, etc. That his music was a weapon cannot be denied. But despite what he said, it also gave enjoyment. □



**WOMAN: THE INCREDIBLE****LIFE OF YOKO ONO**

ALAN CLAYSON WITH BARB JUNGR &amp; ROBB JOHNSON

CHROME DREAMS PRK \$19.99

BY LOUISE GRAY

For a book that purports to be a biography critique and celebration of Yoko Ono's 40-year career as a conceptual artist, it's extraordinary that

*Woman: The Incredible Life Of Yoko Ono* should persist in regarding its subject as an adjunct to her rather more famous husband. A charitable interpretation may suggest that this – three of Ono's four subsections are handily subtitled "Before John," "John And Yoko" and yes, you've got it, "After John" – is a reflection of what Bobo Jung's cat's the "double-edged sword" of marriage to John Lennon, but even so, it's a serious flaw

that shakes the credibility of the skimpy volume before you've reached the first paragraph.

Problems are compounded in the book's method. That Ono granted no interview to Alan Clayson is neither here nor there, as plenty of serviceable biographies are written even in the teeth of opposition from their subjects. But his subsequent reliance on slim secondary sources is as galling as his spurious speculations about, for instance, whether or not it was the pursuit of orgasm that left Ono decidedly unprotected in one sexual encounter. Nor is there any attempt at a dissection.

We're provided with the standard Ono history: Born in 1933 into a wealthy well-connected family; schoolies with crown prince Akhito (another school colleague, the novelist Yukio

Mishima, is not mentioned); college in New York. In his ensuing breathless (not through 20th-century art movements, Clayson seems to think that surrealism, Fluxus and even Brattart started with Ono), "its basic premise that all art is mask, and that anyone could create art." This creates another problem. If this is so, then what makes Ono interesting enough for Clayson to devote an entire book to? We never find out, for he has great difficulty keeping to the subject at hand. His interest is really 1960s pop, and he keeps steering the text back to this destination. Is an orange action taken by The Mavin in 1965 something that impresses Ono, or even titillates? No, it's merely an opportunity for Clayson to wonder, "If that's not Art [his capital], then what?"

Woman only begins to be at all interesting in

Jung's final section, "Art And Music," this is easily the best section, with Jung – a musician herself – providing a reasoned and more balanced take on Ono's output. Well researched and at ease with the discourse and implications of Ono's work, Jung's account is also a personal one. She describes her own encounters with Ono's art and for readers, gazing beneath the leaden weight of the preceding sections, it's a lifeline to realize that here's someone who actually actively likes what Ono does.

Importantly, Jung suggests that Western aesthetic experience provides only one way to view Ono. But this is a rare insight. In the main, Woman does its subject no favors. For a serious discussion of Ono's work, go to YES! Yoko Ono (2000), published by the Japan Society and Harry N Abrams. □

**SITE SPECIFIC SOUND****BRANDON LABELLE**ERRANT BODIES/SILENTIONS/GROUND FAULT  
RECORDINGS PRK + CD \$17

BY RAKHA KHAZAII

In Site Specific Sound, American artist and writer Brandon LaBelle documents a series of installations he created between 1998–2002 for *Lots Beyond Music Sound Festival*. Underlying these pieces is the notion of site specificity, an artistic practice that addresses particular locations or places, touching on such issues as the environment, architecture or public space. The installation *Transient Definition*, for instance,

consists of wooden beams positioned at different angles across the facade of *Lots Beyond* Banque Arts Center. The beams disrupt the building's symmetry and its recognizable architectural logic. Attached to the beams are speakers that emit manipulated vocal sounds, calling attention to the architectural anomaly. The accompanying CD features the sounds produced by these installations. They range from enigmatic clicks and deep rumbles to the diamond-sharp beeps of music. For Portable Installations – a work that is specific to one site but to many. This series of pieces is designed to be played to a group of friends or a

solitary listener, through hand-held or motorized speaker systems, at different volume settings and in any site or building.

The push and pull between sound and architecture that runs through LaBelle's work is discussed in the accompanying interview by Seelbach's Achim Welschend. As LaBelle points out, "Architecture is based on stable forms and visual perspectives, while sound is based on aural zones and vibratory immersion. To bring the two together is to reveal their respective potentials and limitations."

Finally, the book comprises texts in which LaBelle deconstructs the notions of sound and

space. Scratches the surface, tease out the doubts and hesitations and these seemingly familiar notions become, as LaBelle remarks in his introductory essay, "obscure and ambiguous." A city, for instance, may be regarded as a series of buildings or objects laid out in space. An alternative reading, however, might view it as a group of individuals or subjects whose interactions and needs define the space – the need for a home, a shop or whatever. By foregrounding space, the built environment and architecture, Site Specific Sound opens up intriguing lines of research in the theory and practice of sound and art. □

**AUDIO CULTURE: READINGS IN MODERN MUSIC****CHRISTOPH COX & DANIEL WARNER (EDITORS)**

CONTINUUM PRK \$160. PRK \$39.95

BY BRIAN MORTON

It's a dubious fate to wish to see an anthology as fine as *Audio Culture*, but if anyone's planning a college course on modern music, they couldn't find a better set text. Also, the disportion between handbook and software prices should convince students they're getting a bargain.

Cox and Warner cover the frontiers from Jacques Attali on noise, WS Burroughs on the cut-up aesthetic and John Cage, who figures three times under different rubrics of theory and practice, all the way to John Zorn, shrewdly interviewed by Cox himself. There's nothing blandly academic about the approach or the selections, though. All the familiar, possibly predictable, names are represented: Morton Feldman, Edgard Varèse, R Murray Schafer and Merzbow are in the opening "Music And Its Others" section, which deals with theoretical questions of noise, sound and silence, but how many readers will know the Stockfels' "Adequate

Modes Of Listening" or Ian Chambers's "The Aural Walk," two modestly revelatory essays from the "Listening" section?

It's the fulsome of the book, passed to the notion that the traditional concert experience – privileged, formal, even reverential, and actually more artificial than social given those former characteristics – has yielded to something more democratic, unadorned and, in a now notorious analogy drawn from Deleuze and Guattari, rhizome. Stockfels suggests a programme of effort to develop the reflexive consciousness that leads to positive "idle listening" while Chambers explores ways of soundtrackizing everyday life, both soundly practical and at-hand-wiles, remarkably innocent of discursive theory.

A wealth of essays on electronic (re)listening takes Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno somewhat for granted and offers Glenn Gould, Brian Eno, John Zorn, Chiss Colter and Kohko Ishii, mostly varied accounts and perhaps less of a consensus than the "Listening" section. After that, the focus shifts to practice, with separate, well-introduced sections on "The Open Work" (Umberto Eco, Cage on

indeterminacy, Cox again on graphic scores, Zem on the Cocteau game field, and Anthony Braxton offering advice on how his works should be played) and "Experimental Musics" (Nyman, Eno, Carles Boop), improvisation, minimalism, DJ culture and electronic musics, and a host of equally familiar names here. Derek Bailey and Omreta Celestino, Reich and Mettler, Moshé Nagy and Christian Marclay with Yveson Tane, Kenneth Stothausen and Ben Neff's fine "Reassess Five".

If this already sounds like The Wire in exile, Cox is, of course, a distinguished contributor and the Continuum imprint is also responsible for *The Hidden Wiring Of Modern Music*. The only quibble might be that a certain cross-gnawed postmodernism influences the selections too much. To be fair, Cox and Warner give due notice that their remit is unapologetically avant-gardist, and "all but ignores the mainstream *habitus/kunst* of the genres it covers."

Even so, there's nothing by Big Bad Boulez, who perhaps represents the midcentury Establishment, not least substantial on microtonal theory (by, say, Sosa), and for all the faux-orientalism of Cage

and the genuine polyculturalism of Teop, there's a disconcertingly Eurocentric feel to the whole.

Obviously on an aesthetic quest, but suffice it to say that very-checking the common page is a cheap way of reviewing any book, let alone a fine one like this. What comes across intriguingly in *Audio Culture* is the strong continuity of the whole midcentury project; its focus on basic issues of time, technique and audience. So-called postmodernism is merely an applied science, when it isn't merely a lazier form of second-order modernism. The European focus is more honest and more revealing than Global Village ideology, but the international dimension of 20th-century music isn't quite lost. It works at the same deep structural levels – temporality, means and reception – not through a fusion menu of exotic instruments and rhythms or non-canonical forms.

All in all, a wonderful book. The chronology is a bit schematic – 1987 Thomas Edison invents the phonograph – but the glossary, bibliography and discography are exemplary, guaranteeing *Audio Culture* is going to be used rather than merely doped or cribbed. Though you can bet that'll be happening to it as well. □

# On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh



Wizard's woes: Col's John Ralston. Bottom right: Gethead's Conn Newman

## COIL + GITHEAD LONDON OCEAN

UK

Gethead: the music promises so much, a perfect clever/stupid masterpiece under which Minimal Compact's Malik Spiegel, Wire's Colin Newman and Ambient experimentalist Robin Rimbaud (Scanner) might find the freedom to strip on their guitars, raise a little six-string hell and live out their rock 'n' roll ambitions. The reality of tonight's performance, however, is far more prosaic. One might have expected Scanner to relish the opportunity to exchange a Powerbook monitor for the type of monitor that you put your foot on mid-set, but he seems strangely subdued, apathetic even. Could there be a conflict of extracurricular agendas here? Well, recent reworkings of their art-rock classic *Pink Flag* have seen them adopt a slavering hard and fast attack that packs an even greater punch than the group ever managed first time round, so it's not such a surprise to find Newman in this new project intent on exploring popper, dreamer, less spiky and scarier avenues and venting in these rockist tendencies. Unfortunately, this leaves Spiegel

particularly Rimbaud having to play much straighter than they might have liked.

What results is a rather muted take on the post-1984 late 80s live template, with precious few of the twists of logic which made that music worthwhile. Newman's barky vocals, parodying the empty insistence of advertising slogans, are irritating enough, and Spiegel's warm, falsetto basslines provide pleasurable wiggles to the somewhat perfunctory electronic rhythms, but the guitar interplay on which their music stands or falls is way too polite to achieve elevations. A dubby instrumental midway through comes closest, but still sounds uncomfortably similar to the stiff, bloodless soundscapes of 1990s sheepgoats like *Kitchens Of Distinction* or *The Family Circle*. Considering the pledges of those involved, a disappointment. More madness required.

Madness is a quality that nobody could accuse Coil of lacking. Tonight they seem determined to dive into all the dark, dark psychic corners and corridors they've been exploring for the last 20 years, simultaneously Heavily bearded and clad in what appears to be a Victorian one-piece romper suit fashioned from rags and bandages, John Balance comes

over as a cross between a medium inmate and an overgrown hypochondriac child. This persona becomes more and more apposite as the set progresses and the songs' themes of madness, insomnia, childhood innocence and trauma become steadily more insistent and intertwined. Although he cuts a pretty ludicrous figure, and occasionally lapses into sepiatone tantrums that threaten to undermine the music's elusiveness, shifting though very definite focus, Balance is nevertheless a truly compelling performer.

Colf tonight are camp, hilarious and genuinely spooky. Balance is flanked by Trigghwa laundrie and Peter 'Sleepy' Christapherson at their laptops and sandy devices, enclosed respectively in white and black nothing that gives them the vague appearance of tall, swaying ghosts of good and evil. For the first part of the set the group maintain a precarious, alchemical equilibrium between absurdity and Gothic melancholia, and the results are simply breathtaking. A piece called 'See Whi Sun Ra' messages, unbelievably, to fulfil the promise of its title. Over a suspended landscape flooded with lush tined percussion washes and leering bony-jelly from Tom Edwards and Cliff

Stapleton respectively, Balance details his ultimate fantasy encounter, culminating in the outlandish proclamation, 'The time has come for me to launch my dream invasion.' At this the music ends and swoons in some noisy and abandon. It's deeply onto, it's deeply silly, it's truly audacious and utterly magical.

Last successful are the moments when they seem to pander to the darkside predilections of a substantial proportion of their audience. Their overly reversal take on the traditional 'All The Pretty Little Horses' lacks the edge naivety of the Current 93 version on which it is modelled, and a later piece, which sees Balance yelling, 'I can't get a word in edgeways' for minutes on end, ultimately induces the boredom and frustration it is attempting to comment on. Luckily Thigpa and Sleepy pull things together on the final piece 'Black Antics', a grand jagged epic in which the two children's song 'Feed The Birds' from Mary Poppins is severely and preposterously compromised by dark, pulsating electronics and an anguished final chorus: 'Where's your child? Do you know where they are? Are they in the trees? Are they feeding the birds?' And it's become all too clear that in Col's world, these birds are dangerous. □



Henry Gross and Fred Anderson in Montreal

## SUONI PER IL POPOLO MONTREAL VARIOUS LOCATIONS CANADA

BY BENOT CHAPUT &amp; BYRON COLEY

While it is difficult to pick an absolutely favourite event from a festival as varied and long as the fourth instalment of Suoni Per Il Popolo, which ran over the three weeks of June, there is one that really stands out — a day called Popolo In The Park.

In the midst of Montréal's Parc Lahané was a small stage we arrived to the sound of the beautiful, fiery infected steel string guitar work of Harris Newman. It was a gorgeous, sunny afternoon and Newman's music so abstrusely blue and transformational, sated the atmosphere perfectly. Then all hell broke loose. Petit Théâtre De l'Absolu put on a minimalist puppet show, *The Rooster And The Angel*. With a strong anti-imperialist theme, sh't jokes and slaps of violence, the kids who crowded around was howling with laughter. Next, Sam Skalabi improvised on the oud, with Will Euriel on tabla and Godspeed's Therry Amor on bass coming across like aural and A-Sun Ra Parade followed, during which all the children got mad up and

marched around while several local musicians blared like free apes on speed.

Another high point was the room of Seattle's Sun City Girls, who played two sets. One night featured a huge ensemble convened by Sheebah, including the tapdancer Sami Febbo. The second show was with Paul Flehmyne and Chris Cosano, whose four hands beat your year. These musicians always deliver revelations about the power of biliary systems. Cosano's wildly mutated drum strategies power-melding with Flehmyne's voluptuously ripped soprano philosophy never fails to destroy. But these nights belonged to The Sun City Girls, who were fire-fuelled on both evenings. Playing two different sets, they alternated between creating waves of exotic free rock, bizarre comedy routines and well-rotted some muck.

In the double-room due of Muckin Goldstein and Jerry Jenkins, Goldstein's playing had some of the acrobatic quality of Dinitto Coleman's, and the mix of that with Jenkins's light, almost traditional folk tone was beautiful. From the back of the club it was damn hard to hear, but it would be great to see this combination repeated elsewhere.



Other odd combinations included Tony Connors performance with Montreal's drum/violin duo Hunged Up. There were so many long, low string tones floating around the room one young wag quipped that it sounded like "a soundtrack for Michael Bay's movie Wisconsin Death Trip" — an accurate description. A different kind of mutation was dropping that night in front of the Casa, where local trio The Pink Rabes played their frenz-experiment squeezed the shining funk out of all bodies within earshot. Another moment came when Rufus Horney (whose bagpipes playing usually makes us remember the instrument was designed to be blown in windy fields as a way of declaiming war on guys called MacDonald) joined up with local space scum comebe, Universe, to destroy some we almost recognized.

One of the most anticipated event was the two-night stand by long lost boozers Henry Grimes. Both nights he played with drummer Hamid Drake, the first with Daniel Carter and Subir Moran on the front line, the second with Fred Anderson and Keld Jordan. And while there were those who were less than thrilled with Grimes's technique (he was, after all, standing in for the unassable Willem

Parker both nights), there was true split in the air, especially on the first night. Carter, Drake and Moran were all playing at the top of their telepathic form, and Grimes, during the second set, gave the impression that he was generating a hell of a lot of energy, piping like a gay sloping on a hill of banana peels on his way into the motion embankment of a female volcano. The people announced in front of the stage where la belle ging of Montréal's excellent CD Facetime shop played. And this good character and hosted throughout Grimes set the drunken sets at a cow naming competition. This gave the proceedings a special edge.

Another great night was hosted by Constellation Records, featuring sets ranging from Roy Campbell's Pyramid Trío's fast power surge and the groovy guitar floriture of Christina Carter, to the drunken antics of Fly Pan Am absent Los Coopers, to a swirly sh't set by Gaseive Castreón. Black Dixie Doctor stood out: their album is great and seeing them live brings out what they are from being a simple Monier outfit. The sheer tension and intensity of their playing brought you far beyond any hidebound preconception to something relevant to all.

## THE DEATH OF NERO LONDON HOXTON HALL UK

BY TOM PERCHARD

Round the corner in Hoxton Square some lids from Hackney were performing Romeo And Juliet before tipsy but intense, trendy New Media butterflies. Meanwhile at Hoxton Hall's shadowed of a comedy music hall, the ghost of musical star Marc Lloyd looked down in horror at the Resonance Radio Orchestra's tawdry of a Singaporean guitars, percussions, singers, a harpist and a fiddle crammed onto a cable-wrapped stage to perform what was described as an experimental radiotheatre opera. Because the piece was designed as a resonance FM broadcast rather than a stage performance, the

acoustics, feel and East End Victorians of the room hardly mattered. But what was going on here and outside was central to the opera's purpose, and not just in the community-driven rubric of the Shoreditch Festival, of which the event was a part. In the hall, on the radio and in the square were classical allegories, incongruously placed, inviting examination of ideas of individuality and community.

The story of Nero's reign — written by London Musicians Collective co-director and Wire contributor Ed Baxter — after the accounts of Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius, was narrated by the actor Tom Dean Barn. His compelling delivery — arch and acerbic — was countered by singers in character injecting short, personal ballads. The musicians followed

shorthand graphic and verbal scores, watching a clock for cues. Since the compositional element (stated by Chris Weaver, Ben Drew and Albrecht Geissow) was precise enough only to suggest recurring shapes or actions, much of the detail came from layers of controlled improvisation.

Rome's descent from peace and frugality to egotistic terror was described over a slyly disintegrating jazz groove, counterpointed by character songs and electronic chatter. At the beginning of the second act, Rome burned and an unmanaging has of distorted speech freed exiled as if over a tank commander's radio network. "Barn baby barn," it said, the norm that Nero might have torcht the city so as to reap the spoils of its reconstruction suggesting an element of political metaphor.

Like the fire, the music rose and then petered out for good just over a third of the way through its 90 minutes. The controlled structures of narrative and time limited the range and colour of individual and collective improvisation to a quietly fizzy rust of sound. While the opening acts were successful in their dense juxtaposition of materials, the piece seemed to simplify as it progressed, the vocalists coming to stand in front of a wall of characterless improvisation rather than becoming part of a matrix of consciousnesses. And although the piece had no simple meaning, that seemed to be a theme of the opera's subject, performance and broadcast reception: overlapping voices and subtleties existing, competing with, or existing within tyranny. □

Sept  
2004

SPIRITZ

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Enjoy the silence: the Placard Headphone Festival

### LONDON PLACARD HEADPHONE FESTIVAL 2004

LONDON STATE 51  
UK

BY CLINT ROLL

If you've ever attended a concert where electronic sound was being relentlessly carried through a protruding PA system, where the music actually sounded better from the bar in the adjacent room, where metropolitan networking and sipping seemed more attractive, more urgent, than listening to the performers, and you wondered whether they might be another way of presenting electronic music, then you may welcome Placard, the London Headphone Festival, an annual all-day at Hosters's delightfully crumpling State 51 factory. Listeners sprawl around a large room on carpets and sofas, all connected by headphone cables to the current performer, and all, praise the lord, listening, in varying degrees of rapture or intensity. A projection on the wall tells that the 20 minute slot will finish in 0.17 seconds, while the next couple of acts are discreetly setting up. I enter, plug my headphones (you bring your own) into the mixer, and commandeer a deckchair. I'm beaming in a golden spotlight, lulled by gently rolling breakers of processed

electric guitar from Karissa ESP and Cheap Machines. It's as good as being at the beach – 40 acts each present a 20 minute piece in the continuously sequenced programme. Even my brief sampling – three hours in the afternoon – shows a consistently high standard. The Placard atmosphere is congenial and oddly comforting. Around the record stall and bar there's time to chat, but in the performance room it's impossible to talk and listen at the same time, so full attention is focused on the sound. Smeak Mianda (aka Robin Warren from the Liberation Janejet collective and Resonance FM) bleeds so 4-4 disaster warnings into his Ambient lamppost. Warren describes his music as "dyspeptic blissness", but I'm afraid I thoroughly enjoyed it.

More robust and driven, Moniker's John Charlton strums guitar chords, using his laptop to script them into a base for a melody on harmonised strings. Charlton's raw approach is tempered by fine judgment and restraint. Sarfolk based Hobham (aka Simon Keay) makes field recordings – rain? Garden furniture? Vegetables growing? – with diabolical outbursts of distortion, bass in a set of homegrown mystery. Janek Schaefer is one of Placard's more heavyweight names. Curiously bookending his

whole show as a message left on an answering machine, he skuffles recordings of different rooms and ambiences, subtle stuff that works well over headphones, but would hardly survive over a PA. Schaefer segues to electronic beatboxing, and then purrs to himself in a Cambridge pub, attempting to break the record for the number of records broken in 30 seconds. It's a slightly embarrassing pub item, and we headphones we are all vividly present.

In complete contrast, Hot Chip are a five piece group, complete with backing vocals, a load of keyboards and the year's most delicate kazoo playing. Their version of One's "I Lost I Am Free" has an exorbitant load of chaos and callousness. Emanuel De Angelis (here the Moa, Lupal project) takes us back to a chilled laptop, glistening arachnids and soothing drapes projected by a gentle beam. I notice that, unlike many, she has no stickers on her computer. Also that an audience member is bootlegging her set to minidisc via one of the hundreds of headphone sockets. Among the acts I sadly missed were David Toop with Max Eastley, Viv Cormagh with Cillian Simpson, and Brighton's Same As/It's Different team, whose photo looked promisingly psychedelic. Hopefully I'll be back next year. □

### AKI ONDA + DUSTBREEDERS & JUNKO PARIS INSTANTS CHAVIRES FRANCE

BY DAN WARTBURTON

Aki Onoda belongs to the younger generation of live electronic performers. Luc Farrow recently described his "newave cassette" – remaining to the Pierre Schaeffer ideal of reconstructing found sound. His equipment of choice is a mixing desk and a couple of Walkman which he manipulates like Gameboys, as he stands behind a large table scattered with dozens of cassettes containing sounds collected on his travels around the world, recorded on a portable machine bought on a Boston street corner a decade ago. These are woven into a rich, textured fabric that Onoda rips open repeatedly using the fast forward and rewind buttons of his Walkman to reveal the precision of a DJ He has written that there is "no particular meaning to the use of the cassette recorder" other than it is

"portable, economical [and] has quick responses". But the defiantly analogue grain and hiss of old cassette tape is as important a part of his soundworld as crictic Stax samples are to vintage throb flip flop, a warm mysterious blur out of which fragments of birdsong, conversation and traffic emerge like ghosts.

Progammer Onida with Dustbreeders is a shrewd move, both transform sound reproductions into producers in their own right, but with radically different results. Back when they released *Poem For Tuning Stock Chav And Bench* (After La Mont), the Metabased sonic terrorist insisted on total anonymity but as their recent *Starlight Furniture* album *Mommy Close The Door* (reviewed in The Wire 246) names names – Yves Béza, Thierry Delies and Michel Herrin (of A Bright Scene)/Tuttlez Demos fame! – there's no mystery anymore, other than how they manage to create such an awesome wall of noise from these humble "mange-disques", those cute dayglo plastic

battery-powered handheld record players believed of the Yé-Yé generation.

The source vinyl thumbnails are scarcely identifiable – though I'd bet a set an odd bit of AC/DC before it was shredded into hives of feedback – but the stage antics are, as Bolt, Delles and Herrin writhle around the floor in Metal agony. Meanwhile, standing demurely in the midst of it all is, if she was wearing for a bus is Junko Iino/age of Hyakken, with microphone held against her lips and unleashing a torrent of devastatingly high squeals and shrills that burn right through. The Dustbreeders' noxious feedback cloud like a laser. The cherry on the cake is drummer Katie O'Loosey, now resident in France but formerly based in New York (where she's kicked up a storm behind Elliott Sharp, amongst others), who drives the group forward like that dirty black jaguar in *Devil*, edging the audience ever closer to the cliff, 30 minutes is all it takes to push them over the edge. □

# MIND YOUR HEAD 2004

## THE DARK SEASON



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BUDGIE & LEONARD ETO

FRI 16 & SAT 16 OCT / RFH / 7.30PM

The epic sweep of even the earliest Siouxsie material has been begging to be interpreted in a live orchestral setting and now, finally, Siouxsie realises her dream. These world premiere shows feature a very personal choice of songs from every phase of Siouxsie's repertoire, accompanied by the orchestral power of the Millenia Ensemble, with Budgie and Leonard Eto (ex-Kodz), who together provide an awe-inspiring East/West drumming fusion throughout the show.

### THE MAGNETIC FIELDS

+ SUPPORT

SUN 10 OCT / RFH / 7.30PM

The Magnetic Fields are just one of the many musical incarnations of Stephen Merritt, the greatest songwriter of his generation (Time Out). His blurring of wry humour, sharp wit and desolation make him a complete original and one of the most distinctive voices of modern America. His new CD, *I*, with its barbed look at life and love, has prompted comparisons with such talents as Oscar Wilde, Cole Porter and Morrissey, but as an unrepentant pop fan Merritt seems just as happy when people notice his ABBA influences.

'The new songs sound fantastic; unrequited love has rarely sounded so brave.'  
(The Observer)

### COWBOY JUNKIES

WITH SPECIAL GUEST VIC CHESNUTT

TUE 12 OCT / RFH / 7.30PM

Since the multi-platinum success of their seminal 1988 release *The Trinity Sessions* an album which helped set the stage for the burgeoning Americana roots music movement, Cowboy Junkies have attracted an uncommonly dedicated international following who have, to this day, remained unfalteringly loyal. Tonight they perform *One Soul Now*, their ninth studio release, drawing together all the wisdom, passion, skill and insight collected during almost 20 years of playing, writing, touring, recording and living together as a band. This is arguably the most outward-looking album of their career.

### PETER HAMMILL

FRI 9 OCT / QEH / 8PM

Returning by popular demand to the QEH after his last sell-out gig, Peter Hammill's literate and passionate music should never be missed. Hammill was the backbone of underground faves, Van der Graaf Generator, who shook British music with as much fervour as punk. That independent spirit lives on in Peter's solo career. He is cited by major artists as a huge influence and tonight you'll find out why.



### ROBYN HITCHCOCK

SAT 9 OCT / PUR / 9.30PM

Hitchcock continues to pen delightfully surreal songs like the inheritor of Syd Barrett's addled genius. *Q* magazine

Tonight, Robyn Hitchcock, one of the most enduring and eccentric singer-songwriters and live performers that England has produced, performs material from *Spooked*.



### IVA BITTOVA

SAT 9 OCT / PUR / 7.45PM

... Bittova makes a unique music, at once experimental and earthy, pushing the envelope of established musical order while cooing up raw Gypsy spirit. 'Don't miss.' (Jazz Times)



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Sunday 21 November ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL  
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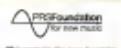
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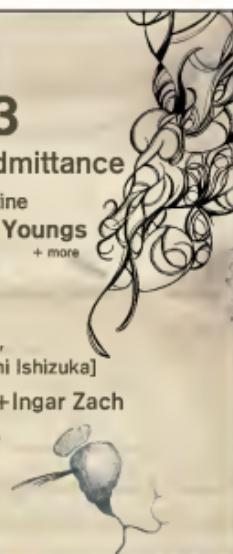
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- SA 16/10 SEATS & BEATS & U-COVER PRESENT  
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For a detailed programme and ticket ordering, contact:  
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# Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

Send info to *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK

Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, [listings@thewire.co.uk](mailto:listings@thewire.co.uk). Compiled by Phil England

## UK festivals

### HOMEFIRE

LONDON

Two-day alternative folk event featuring emerging acoustic artists alongside headliners English fingerpicking veterans Bert Jansch. The full line-up is: Bert Jansch, Low'n'Lean Sparhawk, Adam, Juanita Molina, Michael P. Hinson, Memory Band and special guest (18 September): Smog, Joanna Newsom, Adrin, Will Mason and Neon (19). London Conway Hall, 18-19 September, 3pm & 4pm, £16.50/day, 0871 655 663, [www.conwayhalls.com](http://www.conwayhalls.com)

### MUSIC FROM THE ISLAMIC WORLD

UK

Free afternoon weekend concert series hosted by the Horniman Museum in South London, which houses the UK's largest collection of musical instruments both ancient and modern from around the world. Senegalese spike fiddle player Jideh Camara plays music from Gambe (12 September), Bulgarian传统 oud player Ahmed Mukhtar (19), Sidi Sabri performs qawwali music (25) and Imani Ensemble play Persian classical music based on mystical poetry (2 October). Early arrival is recommended as seating is limited. London Horniman Museum, 3-4 15pm, 020 8869 1872, [www.horniman.ac.uk](http://www.horniman.ac.uk)

## International festivals

### ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

USA

Last September The Wire hooked up with Chicago's Empty Bottle venue to present a five day festival of outsider sounds under the banner Adventures In Modern Music. It was such a success that we are doing it again this year. As in 2003, the festival is spread over two days and features a stellar line-up: Book Bigr, Dubway, Keith Rowe & Axel Dörner and Leutertuer John (22 September); GFI Of Gabe, Sean Lisse, Merzbow and Doyle Redford Trist (23). Berbermagus, Telefon Tel Aviv, Paul Hansen-Low & Ken Vandermark and Contrabass Rarities (24).

Thomas Brinkmann, Sightings, Keith Fullerton Whitman and Entrance (25); Ghost, Xu Ai, Nsognj and Double Leopards (26). Chicago Empty Bottle, 22-26 September, 9pm, \$15 per show or \$60 limited event pass, [www.emptybottle.com](http://www.emptybottle.com). As part of the festival, a session of underground music films curated by The Wire will run at the Gene Siskel Film Center at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago throughout September, [www.sakaifilmcenter.org](http://www.sakaifilmcenter.org)

### ARS ELECTRONICA FESTIVAL

AUSTRIA

Digital arts festival with exhibitions, concerts, symposiums, workshops and club nights exploring the theme TIMESCAPE: The World in 25 Years. Artists include Pix An Electrico, digital music winners Thomas Koenig, ADG and Jenek Schreiter. In addition, Austrian Kraszniolek presents Reverb Radio, an event looking at 80 years of radio art in Austria featuring performances by Edith Garcia, Scanneer, Steve Hemminki, Vox Vocis, Mai Zebibka, Electric Indigo and more. Link various venues 2-7 September, [www.aec.at](http://www.aec.at)

### LA BATIÈRE: FESTIVAL DE GENÈVE

SWITZERLAND

Large scale festival featuring music from Charente-Maritime Palestine, Pan Sonic, Mike Patton & Rahzel, Rester Nation, Sonic Youth, Haizak, Ondrasik Fenner, Philip Jeck and Refael Tordi among many others. Geneva various venues, 26 August-11 September, [www.batiere.ch](http://www.batiere.ch)

### GUELPH JAZZ FESTIVAL & COLLOQUIUM

CANADA

International Jazz and New Music event combining workshops, panel discussions and lectures with performances. This year features Archie Shepp/Rossen Radich/Rigoberto Wiferman/Peter Ayrne, Cytia, Susie Ibarra Trio, Shaike Narrowsky/William Parker/Hamid Drake, Bob Ostertag/Peter Hebert/Thee Beckmans, Jon Dernie & Joene Hiltz, Jollie Léandre & Inga Cooke, and many others. Keynotes talk by Archie Shepp. Guelph various venues, 8-12 September, 001 519 763 4952, [www.gjzfestival.com](http://www.gjzfestival.com)

### HAPPY NEW EARS

BELGIUM

Festival of cutting edge music featuring Ilmend Friedman/Jelle Liebrecht/Joseph Suchy, Matamoko, Jack Dangers, Ryot, Ikeda, Ars Nova & Luc Ferron, Noise-Maker/Fits, Moniek Daage, Pierre Basets and others. Link Kontiki, 30 September-17 October, [www.happynewears.be](http://www.happynewears.be)

### KLANGWALD

LATVIA

Second year for this Baltic electronic music festival featuring AMM/Felix Kretza, Kefle Matthews, Raster-Noton, Feat. Emile, Spanik, CMV/Hauswolff, plus local cutting edge artists from Latvia and Lithuania and a film and video programme. Riga Theatre and Music Museum, 3 & 4 September, 0031 946 4264, [www.skumenes.lv](http://www.skumenes.lv)

### THE NIGHT OF THE UNEXPECTED

NETHERLANDS

A packed evening featuring gents of the Dutch New Music scene as well as intriguing collaborations such as the first meeting of Japan's Keiji Haino and Iwao Irie writer and musician David Toop. The event also features Orkestar De Volharding performing a new work with percussionists Tatsuro Kihara accompanied by images of non-Western TV broadcasts, Japanese minimalist duo Czajko; newly heard player-piano studies by Corinna Narancio, French event tumtumbler Erik M. Thomas Brinkmann's Kliss and more. Amsterdam Paradiso, 9 September, 09pm, EUR 10, 0031 30 20796 0077, [www.paradiso.nl](http://www.paradiso.nl)

### SONIC ACTS

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Festival featuring MINED, Fenness, Chris Watson, CHK, Phillip Jeck, BJ Nilsen, CW Ivan Hauswolff, Rester Nation, Speedy J, Jon Wozencraft and others. Amsterdam Paradiso, 23-25 September, 0031 20 626 4521, [www.sonicsacts.com](http://www.sonicsacts.com)

### VILLETTIE NUMÉRIQUE

FRANCE

Festival of digital arts featuring Sigur Rós performing Ólafn Rónin Raagic, concerts by Karhivest Skoðumskar; electronic music performances by Fenness, Scanneer/Simon Fisher Turner and Merhof in the Planten und Blomen, and

concerts by Taxademoon, Spelkmen, Home Video, Kim Howley, Puppetmaster and Cylos Plus, exhibitions of digital art, dance performances and a cinema programme. Paris La Villette, 21 September-3 October, [www.villette-renemeque.com](http://www.villette-renemeque.com)

## Special events

### ALAN WILKINSON'S 50TH BIRTHDAY

UK

The improvising saxophonist celebrates his first 50 years with a series of three concerts at his North London pub night. Artists include percussioneer Paul Haslett, Steve Noble and Mark Sanderson; bass players Simon Fell and Marcio Mattos; electric guitarist Mash Hakenen and the Ys Basque quartet. London Film Riot at Ryans, 15, 16, 22 & 29 September, £5/£3, 8:30pm, 020 7529 1100

### BLACK PRESIDENT

UK

Exhibition about the life and work of the Nigerian musical legend Fela Kuti. The collection features more than 40 exhibits by 34 artists including original cover artwork by Ghislaine Lelli, and tributes and related pieces by DJ Spooky, Yinka Shonibare, Fred Wilson and Karen Walker. There will also be a number of headphones listening stations with music by Fela as well as music that both influenced, and was influenced by him. The exhibition concludes a series of concerts and films in October - see Information for details. London Barbican Centre, 9 September-24 October, 10am-7:30pm, 0845 120 7550, [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

### FIRST ALARIC SUMMER FESTIVAL

UK

Sound, poetry and visual artworks by this recently deceased cross-media artist performed by Lawrence Upton, Rory McDermott, Joseph Hyde, Steve Hayford and John Leveck. Dover London Canaries People's Theatre, 10-12 September, 0031 7916 5878, [times.pizza.mary](http://times.pizza.mary), [pages.britishlibrary.net/summer](http://pages.britishlibrary.net/summer)

### MARCUS SCHMICKLER SEASON

UK

Organic electronist leads a series of concerts

La MaMa E.T.C., in association with World Music Institute, presents  
**A 4-Day Festival Celebrating the INTERPRETATIONS Series at 15**

**Thu 14:** Progressive Dinner 1 - "Blow" Gege TYRANNY • Thomas BUCKNER • Amnon LOCKWOOD • Peter KOTIK/SEM Ensemble • Alvin LUCIER **Fri 15:** Progressive Dinner 2 - BGT & Jon GIBSON • Muhal Richard ABRAMS • Roscoe MITCHELL • Jin Hi KIM • David BEHRMAN **Sat 16:** afternoon: Progressive Dinner 3 - BGT & JG & Peter ZUMMO • Robert ASHLEY • Douglas EWART • David ROSENBOOM • Jim STALEY • Laetitia SONAMI **Sat 16:** evening: Progressive Dinner 4 - BGT & JG & PJ & Leroy JENKINS • DOWNTOWN ENSEMBLE (William HELLERMANN/Daniel GOODE/Mary Jane LEACH/Peter ZUMMO) • Phillip NIBLOCK • Joshua FRIED • Paulina OLIVEROS/DEEP LISTENING BAND **Sun 17:** afternoon: Progressive Dinner 5 - BGT & JG & PJ & LJ & Mark DRESSER • Carl STONE • Michael J. SCHUMACHER • FAST FORWARD • William DUCKWORTH/CATHEDRAL BAND • Nicolas COLLINS **Sun 17:** evening: Progressive Dinner 6 - BGT & JG & PJ & MD & Roscoe MITCHELL • Jean LA BARBARA • Morton SUBOTNICK • George LEWIS • Kyle GANN • David FIRST & Tom HAMILTON **Festival Emcee:** Chris MANN

**SOUNDS LIKE NOW**

OCT  
14-17  
2004

AT  
LA MAMA  
E.T.C.  
74A E. 4TH  
NEW YORK  
[www.interpretations.info](http://www.interpretations.info)

with collaborations old and new. The three-night programme is as follows: Scots contemporary music group Paragon Ensemble play pieces by Schmidkler (30 September), two new electronic works (1 October); a duo with analogues electronics improvisor Thomas Lohn (2). The concerts are complemented on the final evening by an installed talk by A-Nest's Geog Odyle or visual artist who make music followed by a post-concert club presented by Odyle and others (2). Glasgow Centre for Contemporary Arts, £20/£15 season ticket, [www.cca-glasgow.com](http://www.cca-glasgow.com)

#### OCTOPHONIC LUNAPHONE

UK

A performance by Birmingham artist Brian Duffy using adapted telescopes ('lunaphones') to translate light waves from stars into sonic information. Birmingham MAC Canova Hill Park Anna, 29 August, 9pm, £5/£3, 0121 440 3838.

#### RESONANCE LIVE TO AIR

UK

A live event that doubles as a radio broadcast featuring the Resonance Radio Orchestra and many unconfirmed special guests. Expect an eclectic mix of radio art, live music, spoken word, film and a real sitar. London Comedy Hall, 24 September, 7pm, £5/£3, 020 7242 8032.

#### SOUND OASIS

MEXICO

24 hour 3D sound installation in the centre of Mexico City featuring international sound artists working with a 3D sound system created by former Human League singer 37 members. Marilyn Ware, Artists include Chris Watson, Marianne Ansorge, Manuel Roach, Westbrook, Vince Clarke, Reggae Sosa, Guillermo Gualde, Ultra-red, Slavic Kav, Radiquaria, Reckless Howta and others. Mexico City Palacio De Bellas Artes Plaza, 28 September–4 December, free. [www.soundoasis.com.mx](http://www.soundoasis.com.mx).

## On stage

**BECK-LUNCH IMPROVISERS**  
Ballooney meets bassoonery; in the wake of

Hire writer Ben Wilson's biography on Denis Bailey, the author takes to the road in a duo with bassoonist Mack Beck. Sheffield Other Muso (1 September), York (2), Cambridge (3), London Bassooning Centre (6), and London College Bar (6), 020 7388 8579. [www.mackbecktheatre.co.uk/gig.htm](http://www.mackbecktheatre.co.uk/gig.htm)

**TONY BEVAN/OPHY ROBINSON/  
JOHN EDWARDS/MARK SANDERS/  
ASHLEY WALES**

Improvising quintet date London 291 Gallery 8 September, £5/£3, 8:30pm, 020 7613 5676, [www.291gallery.com](http://www.291gallery.com)

#### LOC COXHILL

Solo set from the supreme saxophone maestro with support from the Psychiatric Challenge Improvising quintet. Womington The Pyramid Arts Centre, 11 September, 7:30-11pm, 01925 442345, [www.pyramidarts.co.uk](http://www.pyramidarts.co.uk)

#### LONDON IMPROVISERS' ORCHESTRA

Monthly shoving for the capital's improvising ensemble performing conductors and other one-off, spontaneous compositions. London Red Rose Club, 5 September and every first Sunday of the month, 8pm, £5/£3, 020 7263 7265.

#### NILS PETTER MOLVAER + WIDE OPEN CAGE

Norwegian trumpeter/composer Molvaer and French live electronic act Wide Open Cage. London Cargo, 10 September, 8pm-3am, £6/£10, 020 7739 3440, [www.cargo-london.com](http://www.cargo-london.com)

#### SONIC YOUTH

The increasingly melodic Youth tour their latest CD Sonic Nurse. Glasgow Barrowlands (1 September) and London Brixton Academy (2). [www.sonicyouth.co.mn](http://www.sonicyouth.co.mn)

#### JIMI TENOR BIG BAND

Progressive lounge from the Finnish maverick's large ensemble. London Jazz Cafe, £15, 020 7918 6060, [www.jazzcafe.org.uk](http://www.jazzcafe.org.uk)

#### JAH WOBBLE

Albion launch for the dub bassist and World fusionist's triple album retrospective I Could Have Been A Carpenter. The evening features Wobble's

English Roots Band, Melina Lio from Leos and special guests. London Cargo, 9 September, 8pm-3am, £15, 020 7739 3440, [www.cargo-london.com](http://www.cargo-london.com)

#### ZUKANICAN

Included Egg Records' micromixers play two free dates supported by The Head Museum, Liverpool The Caledonian (28 August) and London Leytonstone 493 Gallery with Cross Collective (3 September). [www.eggprints.co.uk](http://www.eggprints.co.uk)

## Club spaces

!!!

One-off London date for New York's dance actos sept. London Astoria, 13 October, 7pm, £12.50 advance, £15, 020 7434 9592/04040, [www.boatnotanor.co.uk](http://www.boatnotanor.co.uk)

#### BOAT TING

Electro cultural evening on a boat. This month improvisation from Steve Bedford/John Butcher/Louis Moholo and Roger Turner & Nigel Coombes plus music from New York poet from Paul Barilli, London The Yacht Club, 6 September and every last Monday of the month, 7pm, £10/£12.50, 020 8870 5094, [www.boatting.com](http://www.boatting.com)

#### BREAKIN' BREAD

Hip Hop, funk and breakbeats featuring DJ 11 Smakdown come with guest DJ Leacy and residents Sieg, Rob Lite, Paul T and Kam. London Rhythm Factory, 24 September, 8pm-4am, £5-£11, 07867 547008, [www.breakinbread.org](http://www.breakinbread.org)

#### CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION

Two gigs of interest at Cambridge's premier venue: Ostara Prog rioters Focus (28 September) and Fela Kuti's youngest son Sean Kuti & Egypt 80 (29). Cambridge Junction, 01223 611511, [www.junction.co.uk](http://www.junction.co.uk)

#### CUBE MICROPLEX

Music events at Bristol's independent cinema and multi-arts venue include Deerhoof, My Ambulance Is On Fire and Steve Reich's Pendulum Music (20 August). New York Warp signings Home Video (16), Clean Cut Records

and Deep Cut present Bristol maverick Team Brick plus Flees Pussy and Headless (18), and a Plug 58 night with local talent (30). Bristol Cube Cinema, various times & prices, 0117 444 4400, [www.cubecinema.com](http://www.cubecinema.com)

#### FABRICLIVE

Friday night breakbeat and electronic dance stylings with Jon Carter, Nod26, Howie B, Rebo and Grooverider (3 September); Plump DJs, The Freestyles, Macky, DJ Haze, Krist and Ed Rush (10); Ninn Swayne, Colours' Jonathan Moore, Ali B, Scratch Perverts and The Herbetists (17); and DJ Haze and Blade (24). London Fabric, Finsbury, 9:30pm-Sun 12:10am, 0170 902 0001, [www.fabriclive.com](http://www.fabriclive.com)

#### FIELD

Music and dance event series starting with Tokyo Tora Unami and vocalist Anna Yoshida, with harpsichord Rhodri Davies, Mark Westell on double bass, Angharad Davies on vox and Matt Dowse on trumpet, plus a solo performance by Butoh dancer Yumiko Seki. London Chisenhale Dance Space, 12 September, 6pm, £6/£5, 020 8861 6617.

#### KLINIKER

The well performance club operating on Tuesdays and Fridays. Elmie Seccombe, Burn's The Word, Bruno and Penni team Rotterdam (3 September), Ili Costil (7), Pocket Trumpet Leo (10); Louis Moello The (14), Gal Bondi and Biggi Vinken, Ux Bentley (17), Noisegate magazine night with Fuzzy Collins, Pia Carrardella, James Holcombe and Hugh Metcalfe (24), and Phil Zurker from Switzerland (28 London Sesses, Tuesdays & Fridays, 8pm, £5/£2, 020 8806 8216, [www.klinikercubanfa](http://www.klinikercubanfa)

#### NEW IMPROVISATION AT ST

**CYPRIAN'S**  
The thoroughly improv John Butcher, Simon H Fell, Mario Montes and David Ryan meet Los Angeles players Sara Schoebeck and Harris Eisenstadt. London St Cyprian's Church, 30 September, 7:30pm, £6/£4, 020 7258 0724.

#### OXFORD IMPROVISORS

Irregular concert promotion with The String Tho

# Trip Or Squeek



# Out There

and The Bohman Family featuring Richard Thomas; Oxford Brookes Headington Hill Campus Drama Studio, 26 September, 8pm, £6/£4, 07713 056020, www.oxfordimprovisers.co.uk

## POLITE NOTICE

This month's name for the Bonham brothers' informal improvised weekly featuring Lal Cakhiel/Harris Eisenstadt/Sara Schoenbeck/Simon Hefley/Lian Smith, Ben Watson & Mick Beck (September 6); Kay J Gurni & Richard Sanderson, Kindness/May/Lush and Tom Lawrence Quintet (13); and Beers, Wines & Spirits, 100 and Tie Trystone (20). Please note there is no concert on September 27, London Brionnington Centre, Mondays, 8pm, £4.35, 07940 087409.

## RAYS JAZZ AT FOYLES

Monthly series of improvised music concerts at the relocated record shop and cafe continues with the duo of Sylva Hallst and The Wine's Clive Bell/Ray's Jazz at Foyles, 30 September, 8pm, free, 020 7449 3205, www.foyles.co.uk

## SOLID STEEL

New York monthly featuring DK, PC and Smitty Kev aka DJ Food; London Night Club Temple Price 10 September, 7pm-2am, £10, www.solidsteel.nyc.net/dbz

## THE SPITZ

Live music includes a Replex and Seed Records night with Alejo Pato, Digital, Kansas City Projects (4 September), a two-part performance from Can vocalist Damo Suzuki, first with David Vorhaus, Algiers, Matt Jenkins and MC Russell, and then with The Apothecary (11 September); Italian folk rock group Il Muco present a live soundtrack to Sergei Eisenstein's *Strike* (20); Nalan Independence Day celebration event with Moriba Kello's Sepsothas featuring Yekoleba Sesassio and Dumeu Koyedje (22); Peter and Shout! dub plus Dub (23), and California's Anthoni Helios collective present Passage and Resilient Bodies (25) London The Spitz, 7pm, prices vary, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

## SPRAWL

The diverse evening live electronics returns at new venues. This month Brighton's Same Actor, DJ Lance Morris, James II and Parlison, born DJ Doucoulo Malibou, London Chatterhouse, 8 September, 7.30-11.30pm, £4/£3, 020 7251 8767, www.clue.com/p/sprawl

is new venue. This month Brighton's Same Actor, DJ Lance Morris, James II and Parlison, born DJ Doucoulo Malibou, London Chatterhouse, 8 September, 7.30-11.30pm, £4/£3, 020 7251 8767, www.clue.com/p/sprawl

£22/£18 festival pass, 0870 240 7528, www.theorchestra.co.uk

## LOONON JAZZ FESTIVAL

Annual city-wide umbrella event includes The Anthony Braxton Quartet, Ceci Taylor/Bill Dowd/Jon Cleary, Sam Rivers Trio, Carla Bley, Brad Mehldau, Chafar Youseff, Rachid Taha, Matt Hebert and more. London various venues, 12-21 November, www.loonon.org.uk

## OCHRE 10 FESTIVAL

Ochre Records tenth anniversary event featuring Acid Mothers Temple, Thighpussinians, Will Sergeant's Gliss, Applezeit, The Serpents, The Land Of Nod, Voodoo and 90° South. Gloucester Garthfest, 30 October, 2pm-midnight, £18/£10/£12, 01285 503050

## PERSPECTIVES

SWEDEN Creative music and sound art festival curated by Mats Gustafsson including Fred Frith, MathewAnthony Braxton, Ivo Bioča & Little Melvin, Peter Brozman & Miller Gworek, Caspar Boltzmann & Mats Gustafsson, GUSH with Derek Bailey, Birthe Reinhardt, Manya Crispin Quartet, Audio Laboratory, Wolf Eyes, Kim Hormay Christina Kubisch, DJs, installations, exhibitions and seminars. Various various venues, 21-24 October, www.perspectives.se

## PSYCHIC TV

UK Genesis P-Orridge unveils his assault on normality London Forum, 9 October, 7pm, £20/£15/£10, www.genesis-p-orridge.com

## SENSORIALIA/ROMAEUROPA

ITALY Concert series including DJ Spooky's remix of Birth Of A Nation followed by Pen Solo's *20 October*, Señor Cocteau And His Orchestra (23), gender benders Tere Thaemlitz (27), and a Werl Reprocks night (27 November). Rome various venues, www.sensorialia.it

## SOUDIO SUMMIT

AUSTRALIA HipHop and electronic music conference with

panels, workshops and showcase performances. The headlining acts – Beastie Boys, Mike Paradiso and Gang Davis – also play Sydney Opera House (6 October). Newcastle various venues, 1-3 October, www.soundsunited.org

## SONGS LIKE NOW

USA Featuring Alan Lerner, Robert Ashley, Joan La Barbara, Phil Niblock, Pauline Oliveros, Leroy Jenkins, Fast Forward, Mark Dresser, Leisha Sonora, Anne Lockwood, Tom Hamilton and many others. New York various venues, 14-17 October, www.interpretations.info

## UNLIMITED FESTIVAL

AUSTRIA 18th edition of this diverse New Music festival featuring The Necks, The Wytch Project, Ikuo Mori/Christian Fenner/Sylvie Courvoisier/Catherine Jaenisch, Fred Anderson & Herlin Decker, Suisse Bleue Trio, Manuella Instinct Hans Reichel and others. Wiels Alte Wirtschaft, 5-7 November, 00 43 7242 6724, www.unlimitedfestival.at

## CHRISTIAN WOLFF AT 70

UK A rare opportunity to hear the New York School composer's works as well as pieces by Cage, Cornelius Cardew, Charles Ives and Erik Satie. Performers include Wolff himself, Al Neins Project, John Tilbury and others. London St Giles Capplegate, 26 & 29 October, 020 7638 1997; and Cambridge Nettes Yard, 1 November, 01223 352124

## WOW & FLUTTER

USA Performance by composers from San Francisco Tape Music Center featuring pioneering works from 1960s to the present day from Paulette Oliveros, Morton Subotnick, Ramon Sender, Bill Mays and Anthony Marin, New York, 1-2 October, empa@prada

Out There items for the October issue should reach us by Friday 3 September □

# UK Radio

## RESONANCE 104.4 FM

Broadcasts across Central London near 1am, seven days a week with newsbreaks outside these times. CD-quality Web streaming and full listings at [www.resonance104.com](http://www.resonance104.com)

## ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

Thursdays 9.30pm. Presented by The Wire

## BANALITY

Alternate Saturdays 8pm. With Richard Thomas

## BERMUDA TRIANGLE

Thursdays midnight. Presented by These Records

## CONGOLESE MUSIC HOUR

Saturdays 1.30am

## CROOD RADIO

Sundays 11.30pm. John Duncan's radio art show

## DIGGERS

Tuesdays 8pm. With Savage Pendi and Sharon Gill

## FIFTY-FIFTY SOUND SYSTEM

Thursdays 11.30pm. Old school dub & reggae

## IS BLACK MUSIC

Mondays 8pm. With Art Terry and Amber Gowen

## KOSMICHE

Tuesdays 10pm. German space music

## ONYKODO

Alternates Tuesdays 8.30pm. Japanese New Music presented by Paul Head

## OST

Saturdays 4.30pm. Soundtracks with Johnny Thunk

## OUT TO LUNCH

Wednesday 2pm. By Ben Watson

## OVER THE EDGE

Saturdays 9am. With Nigelardine

## ROUGH TRADE SHOP

Thursdays noon. New releases with Simon Russell

## SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

Alternates Tuesdays 8.30pm. With Miles Barnes

## SIMPLIFF RECORD SHOW

Mondays 2pm. Simpliff Record Show

## SOLID STEEL

Mondays 1am. With Colours

## \_SOUND POETS EXPOSED

Sundays 8.30pm. By Chris Gebhart

## SOUND PROJECTING

Fridays 5.30pm. Web Ed Present

## THE TRADITIONAL MUSIC HOUR

Thursdays 2pm. With Reg Hall

## VERMILLION SOUNDS

Alternates Fridays 8.30pm. Environmental recordings

## BBC RADIO 1 97-99 FM

### JOHN PEEL

Tuesday-Thursdays 10pm-midnight

Leftfield music across the board

### GILLES PETTERSON

Thursday midnight-2am. Post-Acid Jam grooves

## BBC RADIO 3 9.30-9.30 PM

### THE LEGEND OF FELA KUTI

5 September 8.30-10.30pm

Documentary on the life of the Nigerian king of Afrobeats

### LATE JUNCTION

Monday-Thursdays 10.15-11.30pm. New Music

### JAZZ ON 3

Fridays 11.30pm-1am

Modern jazz in session and concert

### HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 11pm-1am. New Music Magazine

## MIXING IT

Fridays 10.15-11.30pm

Hyper-realist mix of avant sounds

## BBC LANCASHIRE

96.5/103.0 10.45-11.30 PM, 856 MW

## ON THE WIRE

Saturday 11pm-midnight. The Wire's club column. Steve Baker mixes it up wildstyle

## BBC MERSEYSIDE

96.8 FM, 1485 MW

## PMS

Sunday midnight-2am. Avant sounds mixed

## CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM (MILTON KEYNES)

### GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Friday 10pm-midnight. Eclectic avant jazz

## XFM 104.9 FM (LONDON)

### FLO-MOTION

Sunday 1am-midnight. Leftfield electronica

Links to Net radio broadcasts can be found on The Wire Website: [www.thewire.co.uk](http://www.thewire.co.uk)

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Robert Wyatt

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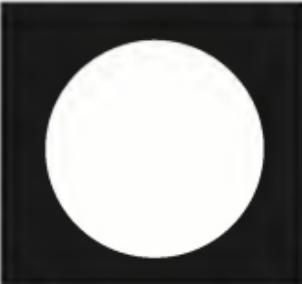
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# Epiphanies

Finding a hidden seam of drone in pop music helped Geeta Dayal realise her father was the oldest swinger in town



In the same loop: Neel and Ravi Shankar

My dad was an organic chemistry professor, an eccentric sort who would often reel off Sanskrit quotes and organic chemistry formulae in the same stream of consciousness sentence. He spent lots of time reading in his office in the cellar, with tattered piles of dusty chemistry texts stacked in every conceivable corner. A single photo of Einstein adorned the bare white wall. When I asked my dad why he admired him, he glossed over the physics and said it was because Einstein cycled to work and refused to comb his hair.

When my dad wasn't thinking about weird science, he thought about weird music. I was a science obsessive and a music obsessive, too. The problem was, our tastes in music diverged wildly and often. My favourite music as a little kid was pop. Meanwhile, he was immersed in Indian classical music by the likes of Zakir Hussain and Ravi Shankar. My dad was a fairly accomplished tabla and harmonium player, and I'd often wake up on weekends to the sounds of him playing ragas in the living room as the sun rose. He was eager to share his enthusiasm for his music, but my eyes glazed over the minute I heard it. Sometimes he would take me to Indian classical concerts and I'd fall fast asleep, what with the constant repetition, lengthy solos, the insistent soothing drone of the tanpura...

Year: 1987. I'm eight years old and we're on the annual holiday to a cottage on a lake in New Hampshire. I take out the cassette tape in the car – one of my dad's beloved Indian classical music tapes – and put in my very first cassette purchase: The White Album.

"Turn this rubbish off!" ordered my dad.

"But Dad, it's The Beatles! They were popular when you were young!"

"I don't care who: The Beatles are. Turn it off!"

My dad couldn't stand The Beatles, or most other Western rock and pop music for that matter. To this day, he doesn't know David Bowie, or The Stones, or any of that lot. Maybe it didn't make sense – more

likely, it just bored him. He shook his head when he saw me watching MTV. To him, it was all horrible noise.

The music he loved best had no melodies I understood. It favoured endless repetition over an attractive pop package. Verses bled into other verses with no discernible choruses. It all seemed formless to me at the time. I would fall asleep almost immediately just listening to it.

My mother only listened to Hindu religious music. The house was crammed full with her tapes. She had a temple room upstairs with marble Krishna deities that she'd bought in Jaipur, and often I'd find her sitting there with her eyes closed, listening to circular, repeating chants for hours on end. She'd go to maranthon prayer sessions at the local Hindu temple that lasted all night, where groups would pray with the same call-and-response chants for hours.

I didn't understand my parents, or their culture. Unlike them, I'd been born and raised in America. What started out as boredom and irritation with Indian music as a child became a passionate rejection of Indian music – and all things Indian – as a snarling, rebellious teenager. I cut most of my black hair off and dyed the rest of it purple, then red, then blue, then green. I listened to punk rock and sported leather, steel-toed boots and a bad attitude. When I pierced my nose at age 18, though, my mother was pleased because she thought I was finally embracing my Indian heritage. But rebellion – and hair dye – fade, and soon after getting to university I got interested in, er, experimentation or different sorts.

Year: 1997. I went to MIT to study chemistry with the goal of being a chemistry professor, just like my dad. Somewhere along the way, I decided I never liked chemistry much and I'd rather be a writer. My dad was heartbroken. A few years later, after reluctantly finishing my science degree, I went back to his office in the cellar and flipped through his organic chemistry textbooks. Yellowed, tattered pages fell out of the books – poems by Wordsworth, Keats, Yeats. I asked him about it. "I never much wanted to do chemistry



when I was your age," he admitted. "I liked poetry. I wanted to be a writer."

I felt I understood my dad better then, but what made me understand him more was my growing interest in more exploratory music, from obscure Techno to Krautrock to field recordings to the wilder reaches of jazz. I took courses in music composition. A class in Western counterpoint and harmony was easy enough, but a class in Indian music composition was intensely difficult. I started to see how Indian classical music was crawling with infinitely complex patterns, and how it trained you to listen to sounds differently. And it was then that I realised that my dad just heard music in a different way – he found beauty in endless repetition, discerned shape in sounds that seemed shapeless. And I found that my reluctant exposure to his music when I was small informed me, in some way, in whatever I listened to now. My love for Naufi can be traced back to Indian music and the ecstatic feeling that comes from constantly looping chants. My love for The Fall stems, at least partially, from my tolerance of repetition. My mother's all-night temple bissauks helped me to understand new culture and dance music. I became interested in minimalism, and the more I read about its formal ties to Indian music, the more it made sense. Instead of The Beatles, I played different stuff for my dad in the car. Terry Riley, Microhouse, Sun City Girls. He was into it, and suddenly I realised how my dad always was.

Year: 2004. It's a hazy Saturday evening in New York, and I'm in my hideout from the city grind – La Monte Young's Dream House on Church Street. I lie down on the white carpet, my head perched on a white pillow, absorbing drones through every fibre of my body. There's a little shrine to Pandit Pran Nath in the corner, with some candles and incense. I started to think that maybe I should take my parents here sometime – they'd probably like this place. They were the ones who taught me to like this music, after all. □

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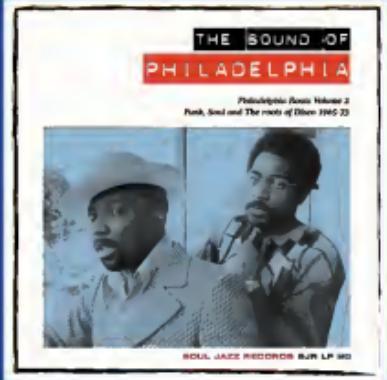
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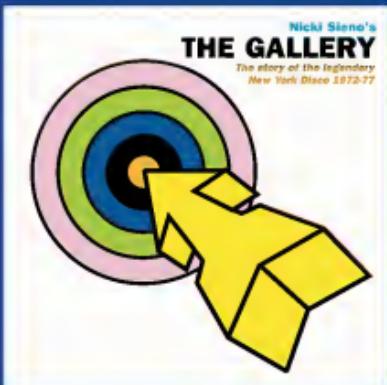
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